

NOTE

THREE great religious movements have exercised a profound influence on the social and spiritual advancement of Modern India—the Brahmo Samaj, the Arya Samaj and the Ramkrishna-Vivekananda Mission. Each of these had its eloquent protagonists who gathered round them bands of faithful and devoted disciples intent on carrying on the torch of their Masters. We are in this volume concerned with the achievements of the leaders of the Brahmo Samaj whose stronghold was Bengal though it has had its distinguished representatives in other parts of India as well.

A History of the Brahmo Samaj was published in two admirable volumes by the late Pundit Sivanath Sastri. It was his further desire to supplement these volumes with a third giving the lives of Brahmo leaders. But the Pundit did not live to do it. The present volume may be said to fulfil the Pundit's aim—in a way. For it contains a record of the doings of Brahmo leaders since the days of Raja Ram Mohun Roy ; that is to say, it is a narrative of the social, religious, educational and philanthropic activities of the pioneers of the Brahmo movement. Now pioneers and reformers have ever lived a life of courage and devotion and their self-denying service to their fellowmen cannot but be an inspiration to those who come after them. Apart from its biographical

interest the volume is enriched with an exposition of the philosophy and tenets of Brahmoism as interpreted by the leaders who preached and made the new faith popular. There are also copious extracts from their writings and speeches which must add considerably to the value of this publication.

THE PUBLISHERS.

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RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

HIS LIFE, WRITINGS AND SPEECHES

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

✻ **HIS** is the first attempt to collect under one cover the voluminous writings of Ram Mohun Roy. They deal with religion, social reform, politics, education, law and administration—to the discussion of which he brought a mind trained in the best cultures of the East and West. The book is invaluable to publicists & reformers.

Contents:—Biographical Sketch; Suttee—The Burning of Widows; The Character of Hindu-Women; Suttee and the Shastras; Address to Lord William Bentinck; Petition to the House of Commons; The Rights of Women; Freedom of the Press; Memorial to the Supreme Court; Appeal to the King-in-Council; English Education in India; Religious Toleration; Prospects of Christianity in India; Rights of A Hindu Over Ancestral Property according to Law; The Revenue System of India; The Indian Peasantry; The Judicial System of India; Settlement in India by Europeans; Regulation III of 1820; Address to British Unitarians; Autobiographical Sketch.

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RĀJA RĀM MOHUN ROY

BIRTH, PARENTAGE AND BOYHOOD

RAM Mohun Roy came from a respectable Brahmin family whose original seat was in an obscure village in the Murshidabad district. His great grandfather, Krishna Chandra Banerji, was a man of note. He, having done some good services to the local Government, was honoured with the title of "Roy," and as this title was afterwards made hereditary, the family has since come to be known as the "Roys," the humbler designation of 'Banerji' being merged, as it were, in the prouder one of 'Roy.' Shortly after the receipt of this titular distinction, Krishna Chandra was invested with the powers of collecting the revenues of the districts of Hughly and Burdwan, and as this important office necessitated the making of Khanacool Krishnagar, in the former district, his headquarters, he built a house at Radhanagar on the banks of the Kana Darkeswar, and removed thither with his family.

Like Krishna Chandra, his son, Braja Binode, was also a man of mark. He served under Siraj-ud-dowla, and his official career was synchronous with that stirring "fateful" epoch, which witnessed the struggles of "a handful of merchants" with the Nawab—struggles which ultimately resulted in the

establishment of the British Empire. Braja Binode had seven sons, of whom Ramkanta held the first place in the father's heart, though he occupied only the fifth in the family pedigree. The subject of this memoir was the son of this man Ramkanta and his wife, Tarini Devi, better known as "Phool Thakurani." Ram Mohun was born at the Radhanagar house in A. D. 1774, a year memorable in the annals of British India, as in it were established both the Supreme Council and the Supreme Court—the highest Executive and the highest Judiciary. Ram Mohun was happy in his parents. His father Ramkanta was a small Zemindar and was held in esteem by people of the surrounding villages as well as of his own. His mother "Phool Thakurani" was a woman of great piety and remarkable firmness of character.

As Ramkanta was in a well-to-do condition, he spared no pains to give an excellent education to his son. But in those days when education was at a low ebb the only places of instruction were the *Patshalas* of Hindu Pandits and *Mukhtabs* of Persian Moulvis. Young Ram Mohun learned the elements of the Bengali language at the village Patshala. But mere knowledge of Bengali was not of much use in those days. Persian was still the language of the Court, and persons who wanted to make their sons cut a respectable figure in life never failed to educate them in Arabic as well as Persian—these two languages being related to each other as parent and child. Accordingly, Ram Mohun was placed under the care of the

Moulvi of the village; and when it was found that he had acquired a fair knowledge of Persian, he was sent in his ninth year to Patna, the chief seat of Arabic learning in Bengal. Here Ram Mohun stayed for a little more than three years, and, endowed as he was by nature with wonderful memory, and equally wonderful faculty of understanding, mastered Persian and Arabic within a comparatively short period. The knowledge which he had thus acquired was not of an ordinary kind; it was deep and extensive. He had read many of the eminent poets (*shairs*) and philosophers (*sufis*) of Persia and Arabia. Among the Persian poets, Hafiz and Sadi were his great favourites, and it was not unoften that he repeated some of their well-known sayings, more especially those of the didactic poet of Shiraz. But as his mind was cast in a philosophic mould, the mystical philosophy of the Sufis pleased him most, and this fondness became deeper still when, on studying later on the *Vedanta* and *Yoga*, he found its great resemblance with Hindu philosophy. He also read Aristotle and Euclid in Arabic in order to qualify himself in Grecian lore so far as it was then known in the East.

Having learned Persian and Arabic in conformity, as he says, with the usage of his paternal kinsmen who were all worldly men, he, agreeably to the usage of his maternal relations who were all priests by profession, wanted to learn Sanskrit and the theological works written in it, which contain the body of

Hindu literature, law and religion; and as Benares (Kasi) has from remote antiquity been the chief seat of Sanskrit learning, he was in his fourteenth year sent to that holy city to study that language of languages. Ram Mohun commenced his study with a whole heart, and, as he was not sparing in his efforts to stock his mind with useful knowledge, he mastered the classical language of the Hindus with the same ease with which he had mastered that of the Mohammedans. Ram Mohun stayed at Benares till his sixteenth year; and it was here that he imbibed the monotheistic tenets of the *Vedanta* and the *Upanishads*, which made him a determined enemy of idolatry. Thus, he returned home quite an altered man—one who was destined to upset the traditions of his family.

ADIEU TO HOME AND TRAVELS

Soon after his return home, Ram Mohun wished to give publicity to his views on religion. His study of the philosophy of the Sufis had made quite an impression on his mind, and when it was deepened and strengthened by his knowledge of Hindu philosophy, he became a thorough-going opponent of Hinduism as it was then in vogue. He wrote a work condemning idolatry as being opposed to the religion taught in the Vedas. This little book was written in Persian with an Arabic preface, and was very properly styled *Tuhfatul Muwahhiddin*. As the work called in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindus, it gave great offence to the young

man's father, Ramkanta, who was a bigoted Hindu, having deep regard for the gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon. A rupture took place, in consequence, between father and son, and things soon took such a bad turn that Ram Mohun found his home too hot for him; and though not actually turned out of it by sheer force, he did not deem it safe to stay in it any longer. Accordingly, he left his paternal roof, and threw himself adrift on the world quite alone and unfriended. But he was not the man to despond and lose courage under circumstances however adverse. He did not loiter about his village but started at once on travels.

Ram Mohun Roy started on his travels with a view to add to his knowledge by acquainting himself with the manners, customs and religions of the people whose country he passed through. His travels occupied about four years during which he visited several places, both within the bounds of Hindusthan and outside it. Even distant Tibet was included in his programme, and he went there to obtain first-hand knowledge of the doctrines of Buddhism. From before that time India had been denuded of the Buddhists who, being unable to bear the violent on-slaught of Sankaracharya, had left the country *en masse*. The doctrines of Buddhism, as they were taught at that reputed seat, did not, however, commend themselves to Ram Mohun Roy's mind and as he was a bold outspoken man, he did not make secret of his own religious convictions.

His assertion of monotheistic doctrines gave offence to the Lama worshippers, so much so that in their fanatic fury they were resolved to lay violent hands on him, and they would certainly have executed their resolve but for the help which the poor Hindu received from a quarter whence it was least expected. Some kind-hearted women of the place readily came to his rescue and by their timely help saved him from imminent danger. This circumstance made a very deep impression on his mind, and ever after he became a warm friend and staunch advocate of the tender sex. No wonder that he laboured hard for the emancipation of women.

RESTORATION TO PATERNAL FAVOUR

While Ram Mohun Roy was thus touring far away from home, Ramkanta, whose fatherly feeling, swayed by religious bigotry, had proved unkind to his son, felt the separation very much, and his heart which was by no means hard and cruel, was moved. Misguided as he thought his son had been, Ramkanta sent out men after him, who, on finding him out, acquainted him with his father's wish. Ram Mohun Roy, who had not left home for good but still retained what is called in law *animus revertendi*, consented to return; and on his arrival at home was warmly received by Ramkanta. A reconciliation took place between father and son, and they became friends again. Knowing full well what the state of Ram Mohun's mind really was, Ramkanta, with a view to bind him hard-and-fast to the world,

got him married. The ceremony was performed in the usual orthodox style, and the wedded couple commenced to pass their days in peace and comfort. But domestic happiness was not all to Ram Mohun Roy who constantly turned to study, as the most exhilarating recreation of his life. He had, as we have seen, early acquired a fair knowledge of Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian, besides his own vernacular; but as yet he was a perfect stranger to the language of the foreign rulers, and it was not till his twenty-second year that he commenced to learn English. For some years, however, he made little progress, in English as he was engrossed in the study of the Hindu Shastras which had gained such a firm hold on his mind. About this time this life-long student was also initiated into some other foreign languages, namely Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Ram Mohun was not satisfied merely with the study of the Hindu Shastras; in fact, this study was only the means to an end which was to hold controversies with the Brahmins, and to convince them of their errors. He carried on controversies with the priestly classes upon idol-worship and Sati. One very painful circumstance had turned the young man's attention to the latter subject. Ram Mohun had an elder brother named Jaga Mohun. When this man died, his wife who was devotedly attached to him, burned herself on his funeral pyre. This incident, so very shocking to human feelings, made a very deep impression on his mind, and it was one of the immediate causes which,

RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

in his maturer years, led him to put forth strenuous efforts for the suppression of that horrible, heart-rending practice.

After he had commenced learning English, Ram Mohun Roy began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made himself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of Government. He had from early youth entertained a strong feeling of aversion to the establishment of British power in India; but on coming into closer contact with the British people he gave up his prejudice against them and became strongly inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that British rule, though a foreign rule, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of his countrymen; and he came to know, and enjoyed the confidence of, several of the Europeans in their public capacity. No wonder that he became and remained all through a warm and sincere advocate of British sway in India. But though he endeared himself to the foreign rulers, he continued to alienate his own countrymen by his outspoken attacks on social evils.

FAREWELL TO HOME

Ramkanta, judging of others' mind by his own, had hoped that Ram Mohun, warned by his trials would come round to orthodoxy again. But in this he reckoned without his host. The young reformer, again, took up the cudgels against idolatry and several other practices, and renewed the fight with redoubled zeal and energy. Upon this, the leaders of Hindu

society, finding their religion in danger, tried to put down the proud rebel, and they so far succeeded in their attempt that they brought about his expulsion from home. This melancholy event took place in the last year of the eighteenth century.

IN GOVERNMENT EMPLOY

When Ram Mohun Roy was thrown adrift on the world, he naturally sought for employment. He was then not alone but had, also, a family to support. In the very year in which he was cast out of his paternal abode, he had a son born to him. This was his first-born, who was named Radha Prasad, after Krishna's favourite wife, Radha. Fortunately for the discarded young man, it was not long before he got a clerkship in the Rangpore Collectorate. He afterwards served for some years in the ministerial department of Ramgurh and Bhagalpur until the exigencies of service brought him again to Rangpore. As Ram Mohun was a man of parts and diligence, his rise in the service was almost assured, and he at last rose to the very top by being made Dewan, as the ministerial head was then called. The position of this officer was at that time much higher than it is now. He was the ministerial chief of the district and wielded very large powers. Such an officer had generally considerable influence over his Civilian master, and if the latter happened to be an ease-loving man, was often all in all. Ram Mohun Roy spent about a decade of his life as Dewan, and even after he had bade a long, long adieu to service, he was still called

the Dewanji, until ennobled by the Emperor of Delhi by being created a Raja.

While at Rangpore, Ram Mohun Roy, busily engaged as he certainly was, did not altogether forget his favourite study of the Hindu Shastras. In the odds and ends of time, he not only conversed with the Vedic Rishis, but also held controversies with the Brahmins on several religious and social subjects, more especially idolatry and widow-burning.

SETTLED IN CALCUTTA

When Ram Mohun Roy found that he had amassed money more than sufficient for the fulfilment of the great object he had in view, he resigned his appointment and came down to Calcutta with the purpose, as he said, of "engaging in religious culture and in the investigation of truth." This turn in his life took place in the year 1814, when he had attained his fortieth year. He had made enough of money by strenuous efforts, and, as money is said to draw in more money, it was soon after he had settled down in Calcutta, supplemented by a considerable portion of the property left by his father. This accession was made in consequence of a reconciliation with his mother, Tarini Devi, who had all along managed the family property in pursuance of the arrangement which had been made by her husband Ramkanta.

A few days after coming to Calcutta, Ram Mohun Roy purchased a garden with a house attached to it, built in the European style in Upper Circular

Road, at the eastern extremity of the City. He had before, while serving at Rangpore, purchased a Zemindari yielding an income of Rupees ten thousand a year. In this way he realised his long cherished desire of retiring from service and consecrating the latter portion of his life to philosophy and religion. His love of retirement amounted almost to a passion, and he used to say that a man after acquiring competence should spend his life in the enjoyment of philosophic ease. "Old as I am," he once said to a friend, "I wish I may retire to a solitary cave and there apply myself to the study of the Vedanta and Masnavi." But with all his love of retired life, he never neglected the call of duty which the then miserable condition of his country imperatively made on him, and, as he was right earnest in his love of mankind, readily responded to the call. Ram Mohun Roy was, so to say, a born reformer, and before he left Government service, he had formed the resolution to reform the social and religious life of his country. Now that he had got the sinews of war, he gave full and free vent to the workings of his mind, and proceeded to give his thoughts and feelings a permanent, tangible shape and form. The prevailing Hindu religion being mixed up, as it very largely was, with gross superstitions and shocking ceremonies, he tried to separate the essentials from the excretions. This, he saw, he could do only by laying bare before the people the real nature and character of the Hindu religion as taught in the Vedas,

and the Upanishads. But as these authorities were locked up in Sanskrit of which people were mostly ignorant, it became necessary for him to translate, at least, some parts thereof into the current vernacular, and for wider circulation into the language of the rulers as well, which had become the language of the educated in Bengal.

LITERARY LABOURS

Ram Mohun Roy commenced to translate the Vedas and the Upanishads into Bengali and English. In the very year in which he came to Calcutta, he, in concert with a few friends, established the Atmiya Sabha—*Friendly Society* for the worship of the One Invisible God as inculcated in the Vedas and the Upanishads. In the year following, he brought out a work on the Vedanta in Bengali. This was followed in the next year by an abridgment of the Vedanta and the translations of the Kena Upanishad and the Isha Upanishad, to which were added, in 1819, translations of the Mundaka and the Katha Upanishads: all these publications run in the same direction as they, more or less, speak of the unity of the Godhead. The abridgment of the Vedanta is the most important of all. It gives a summary of the doctrines of the Vedanta Philosophy, of which the one, on which all others hinge, is that God is one and the same, and that the superstitious practices which deform the pure Hindu religion have nothing to do with the true spirit of its teaching. The Vedanta, from which all Hindu Philosophy is

derived, is regarded by us, Hindus, as an inspired work coeval with the creation of the world. It is divided into four parts, namely, Rig, Yajur, Sam and Atharva. In each of them the Unity of the Supreme Being is inculcated and the mode of worshipping Him particularly noticed. The Upanishads, which are in a manner commentaries on the Vedas, also testify to the same state of things. By the aid of all these well-known and well-authenticated works, Ram Mohun Roy proved what real Vedic religion was, and in so doing explained that the rites and ceremonies which, in the popular mind, were associated with it, were but excrescences to be eschewed. In this way he tried to put down idolatry and restore the Hindu faith to its original purity. But by this action he had roused the ire of orthodoxy. His publications produced an intense and widespread agitation in Indian society all over the country. As the historian of the Brahmo Samaj says "all the engines of social persecution were set in motion against him." The spirit in which he bore all this persecution will be best illustrated by the following extract from the preface to his English edition of the Abridgment of the Vedanta :

By taking the path which conscience and sincerity direct, I, born a Brahmin, have exposed myself to the complainings and reproaches, even of some of my relations whose prejudices are strong and whose temporal advantage depends upon the present system. But these, however accumulated, I can tranquilly bear, trusting that a day will arrive when my humble endeavours will be viewed with justice, perhaps acknowledged with gratitude. At any rate, whatever men may say, I cannot be deprived of this consolation: my motives are acceptable to that Being who beholds in secret and compensates openly!

RAM MOHUN ROY'S VIEW OF CHRISTIANITY

We have said that Ram Mohun Roy came in contact with Europeans. Naturally he became a warm admirer of Christianity, and held in high esteem and regard its good and great founder. Indeed, the character of Jesus Christ is above reproach and is worthy of the highest praise. His teachings bring out in prominent relief the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. While studying Persian and Arabic, Ram Mohun had come to appreciate the strict monotheism of the Mahommedans. Their book of books, the Koran, says in so many words that there is no God but God, and Mohomet is his Prophet. The same doctrine he also discovered when he studied the Vedanta philosophy at Benares. This circumstance struck the Hindu student as something strange, seeing that the Hindu world was deeply immersed in idolatry and the worship of the countless gods and goddesses of the Hindu Pantheon. Afterwards, when he came to study the Holy Bible, he found the very same doctrine taught in it. Thus he found that all the three principal religions of the world taught one and the same doctrine. Ram Mohun, as was his wont, had studied the Bible with very great care and diligence, and had acquired a deep and thorough knowledge of its tenets. In fact, his knowledge of the Scriptures was far superior to that of the most so-called Christians. As the teachings of Jesus Christ have found place in the four Gospels of the New Testament, he drew upon them

and prepared a book on the subject for the edification of his countrymen. This book he styled, "The Precepts of Jesus, the guide to peace and happiness," and published it together with translations in Sanskrit and Bengali in the year of grace, 1820. The chief value of these "Precepts" lies in the fact of their being recorded in the very words of the Evangelists, so that there could be no doubt or difficulty about their meaning. But Ram Mohun Roy gave only Christ's precepts, separating them from the other portions which are open to comment; and this is how he justifies the separation of the two portions. Says he in the Introduction to the "Precepts":—

I feel persuaded that by separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral precepts found in that book, these will be more likely to produce the desirable effect of improving the hearts and minds of men of different persuasions and degrees of understanding. For historical and some other passages are liable to the doubts and disputes of freethinkers and anti-Christians, especially miraculous relations, which are not much less wonderful than the fabricated tales handed down to the natives of Asia, and consequently would be apt, at least, to carry little weight with them. On the contrary, moral doctrines, tending evidently to the maintenance of the peace and harmony of mankind at large, are beyond the reach of metaphysical perversion, and intelligible alike to the learned and the unlearned.

In praise of his compilation he continues to observe:—

This simple code of religion and morality is so admirably calculated to elevate men's ideas to high and liberal notion of one God, who has equally subjected all living creatures, without distinction of caste, rank or locality, to change, disappointment, pain and death, and has equally admitted all to be partakers of the bountiful mercies which He has lavished over Nature, and it is, also, so very fitted to regulate the conduct of human

race in the discharge of their various duties to God, to themselves and to society that I cannot but hope the best effects from its promulgation in the present form.

This separation between the essentials and non-essentials of the religion of Jesus was not palatable to the missionaries in general and to the Serampur Baptists in particular, who protested against what was alleged as the heathen interpretation of, and meddling with the Christian religion. Then ensued a controversy in which the victory of Ram Mohun Roy was complete, though bigoted Christians denied him the credit. But no right-thinking persons of the Christian persuasion^o hesitated to say that his arguments were sound and unanswerable, and the extraordinary learning and ability shown in his several replies and their great worth were readily acknowledged in England and America.

Soon after the publication of the final appeal to the Christian public, the Serampur Missionaries, not content with vindicating the truth and excellence of their own doctrines as they understood them, took the offensive and made an all-round attack on the whole body of Hindu Shastras as unreasonable, and also abused the Hindus in very offensive terms in their Bengali newspaper the SAMACHAR DARPAN (Mirror of News), as well as in the FRIEND OF INDIA. Ram Mohun Roy, who never flinched from fight, was ready with a reply and published in answer, the BRAHMINICAL MAGAZINE, the fourth number of which bore date the 15th November, 1823. As was his wont, the answer so made did not bear his own

signature but the name of one Siva Prosad Sarma, a purely feigned name. Thinking that he could not better answer the revilers than by laying bare the Hindu religion in its true light, he thus laid down the real religious creed of the Hindus:—

In conformity with the precepts of our ancient religion, contained in the Holy Vedant, though disregarded by the generality of moderns, we look up to the One Being as the animating and regulating principle of the whole collective body and as the origin of all individual souls, which in a manner somewhat similar vivify and govern their particular bodies; and we reject idolatry in every form and under whatever veil of sophistry it may be practised, either in adoration of an artificial, a material or an imaginary object. The divine homage, which we offer, consists solely in the practice of *Daya* or benevolence towards each other, and not in a fanciful faith or in certain motions of the feet, legs, arms, head, tongue or other bodily organs, in a pulpit or before a temple.

In the paper which he published in the aforesaid Magazine, Ram Mohun Roy ably defended the Hindu systems of philosophy and religion against the insolent attacks of the Missionaries, and attempted to prove the untenability and unreasonableness of the Trinitarian doctrines. The Missionaries were silenced, and they indirectly acknowledged their defeat by not offering any answer either to the fourth number of the BRAHMINICAL MAGAZINE, or to the final appeal to the Christian public.

THE TRINITARIANS AND REV. ADAM

As we have observed above, Ram Mohun Roy was dead against the doctrine of Trinity. He believed in one God and looked upon Him as the Supreme Ruler of all things and objects. Seeing that his belief in the Unity of the Godhead quite tallied with that of the Unitarians, it was not unoften that he

resorted to their Church and joined them in their prayer. This being observed by the Trinitarian Christians, they asked him: "Why do you frequent a Unitarian place of worship instead of the numerously attended established Churches?" Ram Mohun Roy answered that the Unitarian mode of worship, prayer and preaching is quite in unison with the teachings of the Hindu religion as inculcated in the Vedas and the Upanishads, and that the Divinity of Christ, and the principle of the Christian Trinity, are not consistent with the teachings of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. He proceeded to give three more reasons for not attending the established Churches and frequenting the Unitarian Church. These three reasons were very precise and important:

I. Because the doctrine of the Trinity inculcated in those Churches, consisting of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost, is defensible only on the plea of Mystery; while the Trinity preached to us by the Brahmins is a representation of the three principal attributes of the Deity in an allegorical sense, and does, therefore, deserve some momentary attention. The mind, which rejects the latter as a production of the fancy cannot be reasonably expected to adopt the former.

II. Because Unitarians reject polytheism and idolatry under every sophistical modification, and discountenance all the evil consequences resulting from them.

III. Because Unitarians believe, profess and inculcate the doctrine of the Divine Unity—a doctrine which I find firmly maintained both by the Christian scriptures and by our most ancient writings commonly called the Vedas.

The answer thus made was full and to the point, and it is noticeable that thereafter the Missionaries did not trouble Ram Mohun Roy with any such question. As a result of this controversy a few Christians left the Trinitarians and joined the party of the Uni-

tarians. Among these was the Rev. William Adam, a Trinitarian Missionary, who had come out to India to propagate evangelical Christianity. On being convinced by the arguments of Ram Mohun Roy, that the doctrines of the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ and Atonement through the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus were against the proper teaching of the Bible, he renounced Trinitarianism and became a Unitarian Christian. This memorable conversion took place in the latter part of 1821.

By his avowal of Unitarianism, the Rev. gentleman became an eyesore to the Trinitarians, who began to treat him in a manner quite opposed to the spirit of Christianity. This exceptionally hard treatment was dealt to him on account of his having been a Missionary and not an ordinary Christian. Needless to say that the connection of Mr. Adam with the Baptist Mission soon ceased and Ram Mohun had to help him in organising a Unitarian mission in Calcutta. Mr. Adam, besides being an able and learned man, was thoroughly acquainted with the languages, manners and prejudices of the natives. He readily joined Ram Mohun Roy and laboured in concert with him, quite unmindful of the privations and sufferings to which he was subjected by his co-religionists. Mr. Adam was the only American Unitarian Missionary in Bengal and, like his spiritual *guru* and chief, laboured hard for the progress and improvement of this country, and for the spread, among men, of the true religion and the worship of one God. Ram

Mohun regularly attended the Unitarian Churches even against the attacks of his countrymen. But somehow the Church did not prosper and dwindled away by the time that Ram Mohun, impelled by his followers, started the Brahmo Samaj. But to the end Mr. Adam was unswerving in his loyalty and attachment to Ram Mohun.

THE TYTLER CONTROVERSY

Now to the other great controversy of that time. There was one Mr. R. Tytler a medical man who served the honourable East India Company in the capacity of a surgeon. Though a medical man by profession he did not confine himself to the healing art. He also dealt in religion and wrote some works on that momentous subject, among which was a discourse in vindication of the Divinity of Christ. No wonder then that he came into hostile contact with Ram Mohun Roy, who criticised it as being opposed to the true teaching of the Bible. The latter, as we have said over and over again, was a firm believer in the Unity of the Godhead and flatly rejected the doctrine of Divine Incarnations so much in favour with the Trinitarian Christians, of whom Dr. Tytler was one. Ram Mohun Roy, finding that the Doctor believed in the manifestation of God in flesh, and considering that the Incarnation of the Deity was the common basis of Hinduism and Christianity, addressed him a letter asking him in his character of a Trinitarian Christian, to join him in support of their common

cause and cordially co-operate with him in his endeavour to check, as he said, the alarming growth of the Unitarian heresy. But as Ram Mohun Roy was himself a Unitarian, one can easily see that he was not quite serious in asking the Doctor's aid in that way. The result, as might have been expected, was that Dr. Tytler took offence, and not only did he treat Ram Mohun Roy as an enemy of the Christian faith but also applied the most offensive and opprobrious language to the Hindu religion. In his letter, dated 3rd May 1823, on which date the controversy really commenced, he roundly abused Ram Mohun Roy for telling him pointedly that his belief in the Divinity of the Holy Saviour was on a par with a Hindu's belief in his *Thakur*. This abuse was too much for the great Hindu to bear, and he accordingly sent him a letter in reply, wherein he expressed his surprise that a man of the Doctor's reputed learning and accomplishments should have been offended at the mention of resemblance between his belief in the Divinity of Jesus Christ with a Hindu's belief in his *Thakur*, because, said he :

You ought to know that our religious faith and yours are founded on the same sacred basis, *viz*, the *Manifestation of God in flesh* without any restriction to a dark or fair complexion, large or small stature, long or short hair. You cannot surely be ignorant that the Divine Ram was the reputed son of Dasarath, of the offspring of Bhaggeerath, of the tribe of Raghoos, as Jesus was the reputed son of Joseph, of the House of David, of the Tribe of Judah. Ram was the king of the Raghoos and of foreigners, while in like manner Jesus was king of the Jews and Gentiles. Both are stated, in the respective sacred books handed down to us, to have performed very wonderful miracles and ascended up to Heaven. Both were tempted by the Devil while on earth, and both have been wor-

shipped by millions up to the present day. Since God can be born of the Tribe of Judah, how, I ask, is it impossible that he should be born of the tribe of Raghu or of any other nation or race of men? And as the human form and feelings of Ram afford sceptics no good argument against his omnipresent and divine nature, it must be evident to you that this deluded sect of Unitarians can lay no stress on the human form and feelings of Jesus Christ as disproving his divinity.

Thus, the resemblance is very striking and ought to have led the Doctor to think that he had no good reason to be offended at a fact which was so very patent. Ram Mohun Roy proceeded to say:—

You may perhaps urge that there is a wide difference between a belief in Three Persons of the Godhead as maintained by you and a belief in three hundred and thirty millions of persons in the Godhead entertained by the Hindus. But as all such numerical objections are founded on the frail basis of human reason, which we well know is fallible, you must admit that the same Omnipotence, which can make three one and one three, can equally reconcile the unity and plurality of three hundred and thirty millions, both being supported by a sublime mystery which far transcends all human comprehension.

As the reply given by Ram Mohun Roy was simply crushing, the learned Doctor would have done well to give up his position as untenable. But he continued the controversy and made a reply to Ram Mohun or rather Ram Doss, that being the pseudonym under which he conducted the controversy. The reply, which appeared in the *BENGAL HARKARU*, was no reply at all; it was simply abuse and nothing more. In that reply, he was audacious enough to say that Hindu idolatry and Unitarianism were the same and that they both proceeded from the Devil. The Editor of the *HARKARU*, however, coming forward to defend the Doctor, wrote as follows:—

We would put to Ram Doss that there is in our opinion a wide difference between the belief which maintains God to have appeared in the *Flesh* and that of the Hindu who believes the

appearance of the Omnipotent Being in the shape of a Thakur, which, if we are not mistaken, is composed of stone, metal or wood.

As the remark called for a reply, Ram Mohun Roy addressed a letter to the Editor in which, after mentioning his total unacquaintance with the Hindu religion, even though he was resident in Calcutta for a pretty long time, he proceeded to observe:—

Can you find a single Hindu in the whole of India who imagines that the divine Ram, the son of Dasharath by Kaushtilya, his mother, according to the flesh, was composed either of wood, stone or metal?

If you can find even one, there may be some excuse for your mistake in supposing what is so wide of the fact. You may, of course, find numerous consecrated images or statues of the Holy Ram, in the Hindu temples formed of wood and other materials, placed there for the pious purpose of attracting the attention of devotees to that Divine Incarnation, although many good Hindus do not consider such representations as necessary, and worship Ram directly without the intervention of any sensible object. But can you suppose for a moment that a model or picture of any person, whether divine or human, can identify that being with such representation or convert the original existence into the same materials? If this were the case, then the number of men so unfortunate as to have statues or portraits of themselves made, must lose their real essence—their original elements necessarily degenerating into stone or paint and canvas.

But it is indisputable that neither the images of the Holy Jesus in Roman Catholic Churches, nor the representations of Divine Ram in the Hindu temples, are identified with either of those sacred persons.

The above reply being quite unanswerable, the Doctor did not venture to say anything in opposition to or in disparagement of it, but merely made some general remarks whereby he, in a manner, assented to the contention of Ram Mohun Roy. He said:—

We never intended to intimate that any sensible Hindu could for a moment suppose that God was personally present in an image of brass, stone or metal; but we have no hesitation in asserting that such an opinion does prevail, not only among

the Hindus, but amongst the ignorant of all classes whose religious faith prescribes the worship of images as the medium of access to the Deity.

He then concludes by admitting the inability of himself and others of sort to discuss any of the points connected with the religious worship of the Hindus, they having had very few opportunities of making themselves acquainted with them. Then Ram Mohun or rather Ram Doss challenged Dr. Tytler several times to establish the three charges he had brought against Hinduism; but the latter, instead of dealing with arguments took to abusing the opponent.

Dr. Tytler may have been a learned man, but it appears that his power of reasoning was very weak and that his head was anything but logical. In his letter published in the HARKARU, of the 22nd May, in reply to Ram Doss's letter of the 16th, where he described the Buddhists as being inimical to Hinduism, he said with unfeigned sneer: "The sapient Ram Doss now changes his tone, and tells us that the Buddhists 'despise *many* of the gods worshipped by the Hindus.' It thence follows that *some* of the Hindu deities must be objects of their adoration." At this high flight of logical reasoning, Ram Doss justly exclaimed, "Indeed?" and pertinently asked:—

In what school of *wisdom* did the learned Doctor acquire his logic? Although I despise or dislike several members of a family, is this a proof that I must adore the rest? May I not regard the rest with indifference or be unacquainted with them? But granting even that Buddhists do worship some of the Hindu gods while they despise others, may they not still be inimical to Hinduism? Don't the Jews despise one of the Christian gods, worship another and are indifferent to a third, and yet are they inveterate enemies of Christianity?

Dr. Tytler being now, it appears, completely silenced, a friend, under the signature of *A Christian*, came forward to his assistance and addressed a letter to the Editor of the HARKARU in which he made some statements, to which Ram Doss, in his letter of 23rd May, made very able and satisfactory reply.

THE PROSPECTS OF CHRISTIANITY IN INDIA

The Serampore Missionaries, earnest, enthusiastic and painstaking however were not labouring in vain. They had already made some converts and were expecting to make a few more. These converts, however, were for the most part drawn from the lower strata of society ; the gentry, far less the nobility, having been only slightly touched. Of the converts so made, there were only a few who became so through conviction ; the majority abandoned the religion of their forefathers only through selfish motives. But the said Missionaries, though their labours were attended with only a modicum of success, used to make too much of them and felt no hesitation in announcing to the Christian world that they had succeeded in their mission work far beyond their most sanguine expectations. Many of the Trinitarians gladly took them at their word and expressed great joy at the remarkable success which had attended their cause in Native India. But a few of their party who were not so bigoted as the rest, and were not disposed to assent to the opinion or assertion before giving it their careful consideration, entertained some doubt as to the veracity of the statements made by the

Serampore Baptists in their Reports. As for the Unitarians, both of England and America, they were as a body very slow of belief in this matter, and were, therefore, very desirous to know how things were actually faring in India, and whether there was any chance of Christianity being well received in it. Accordingly, a certain number of Unitarians of America went to the Rev. Henry Ware, of Harvard College, a well-known Unitarian Minister, and earnestly asked him if he could by any means obtain the required information. The said professor, in compliance with their request, the propriety of which he so gladly admitted, addressed two letters, one to the Rev. William Adam, the only American Unitarian Missionary, and the other to the subject of this memoir. The letter to Ram Mohun Roy bore date the 24th April 1823, in which the writer thus states the circumstances under which he wrote.

A number of Unitarian Christians with whom I am associated, take a deep interest in extending the knowledge and the blessings of Christianity to those who have not enjoyed its light. But they believe that the methods which had hitherto been employed, are not likely to be effectual, yet they are unwilling to relinquish the hope, that some others may be suggested by a better knowledge than we possess of the actual state of things, that shall prove more successful. They avail themselves of this opportunity, through Captain Heard, who is the bearer of this to endeavour to procure such information as may assist them in judging, whether anything can be done by them to advance the cause of Christianity in India. In pursuance of their design and by their desire, I have prepared a number of questions, a copy of which is enclosed, upon which Captain Heard is kind enough to offer his services to obtain such information as he can from the best sources. From none can we hope for so much, or so satisfactory knowledge as from yourself.

In a post-script, he asked Ram Mohun Roy if, with the knowledge which he possessed of the character both of the Hindu and the Christian Theology and of their moral influence and tendency, he thought it desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity; if so, in what degree desirable, and for what reasons. The number of queries so sent was twenty. Of these questions, the first two appear to be the most important. They are as follows :

1. What is the real success of the great exertions which are being made for the conversion of the natives of India to Christianity ?

2. What is the number and character of the converts ?

Ram Mohun Roy, who, like most Christians, did not find that Christianity was making fair progress in India, felt some scruple as to answering these questions himself in the way in which they should be answered, seeing that the Serampore Missionaries used to make too much of their work and determinedly contradicted anyone who might express a doubt as to the success of their labours. In order to avoid the occasion of a further dispute with them on this point, he followed a course which commended itself to him, and to which no objection could possibly be taken. Instead of answering the above queries in his own language, he adopted the language of the Rev. Abbe Dubois who, from his deep and accurate knowledge of India acquired from Apostolic labours in it during a period of thirty years, was •so well qualified.

to answer them. The Abbe is known not only for his services in the cause of Christian religion, but also for his excellent book on the manners, customs, and religions of Indians. This book is a striking memorial of his varied learning and wealth of experience, and is regarded as masterpiece in its kind. This Indian classic has only lately been edited by that distinguished Anglo-Indian, the late lamented Mr. Beauchamp, who was for several years the Editor of the MADRAS MAIL. On the question of conversion into the Christian faith, Abbe Dubois says:—

The question to be considered may be reduced to these two points: First, is there a possibility of making real converts to Christianity among the natives in India? Secondly, are the means employed for that purpose, and above all, the translation of the Holy Scriptures into the idioms of the country likely to conduce to this desirable object?

To both interrogatories, I will answer in the negative: it is my decided opinion first, that under existing circumstances there is no human possibility of converting the Hindus to any sect of Christianity; and secondly, that the translation of the Holy Scriptures circulated among them, so far from conducing to this end, will, on the contrary, increase the prejudices of the natives against the Christian religion and prove in many respects detrimental to it.

As these assertions, coming from a person of his profession, might to many appear bold and extraordinary, the good Abbe deemed it necessary to adduce arguments and proofs in support of them. In pursuance of his inquiry in this respect, he mentions among others the case of the Baptist Missionaries of Serampore. He thus observes:—

Behold the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore; inquire what are their scriptural successes on the banks of the Ganges; ask them whether those extremely incorrect versions, already

obtained at an immense expense, have produced the sincere conversion of a single pagan; and I am persuaded that if they are asked an answer upon their honour and conscience, they will all reply in the negative.

As to the social position of the converts made by those missionaries and the circumstances which led to their conversion, Ram Mohun Roy said that the generality, if not all of them, were of low caste and were not at all respectable "for their understanding, morals and condition in life"; and that they changed their religion not from inquiry and conviction but from selfish and interested motives.

Among the other queries, the ninth is of considerable importance. It is this:—"What are the chief causes that have prevented, and that continue to prevent, the reception of Christianity by the natives of India? May such of the want of success be reasonably attributed to the form in which the religion is presented to them?" To this query, the following answer was given by Ram Mohun Roy:—

The chief causes which prevent the natives of India from changing their religion are the same as are found in the numerous class of Christians, who are unable to give an answer to any man that asketh the reason of the hope they profess, *viz.*, their reliance on the sanctity of the books received among them as revealed authorities and the variety of prejudices planted in their minds in the early part of life. These are strongly supported by the dread of loss of caste, the consequence of apostacy which separates a husband from his wife, a father from his son, and a mother from her daughter. Besides, the doctrines, which the missionaries maintain and preach, are less conformable with reason than those professed by Mussalmans, and in several points are equally absurd with the popular Hindu creed. Hence there is no rational inducement for either of these tribes to lay aside their respective doctrines, and adopt those held up by the generality of Christians.

As regards the question at the concluding part of the letter of the Rev. Henry Ware, to wit, "Whether it be desirable that the inhabitants of India should be converted to Christianity; in what degree desirable and for what reasons?" Ram Mohun Roy observed that he paused to answer, as he says:—

As I am led to believe, from reason which is set forth in scripture, that in 'every nation he that *feareth God* and worketh *righteousness* is accepted with him' in whatever form of worship he may have been taught to glorify God. Nevertheless, I presume to think that Christianity, if properly inculcated has a greater tendency to improve the moral, social and political state of mankind than any other known religious system.

The work, which was left undone by Dr. Carey and his compeers, was taken up by Dr. Duff and some others, and they succeeded in making some converts even among the gentry. Since then the prospects of Christianity is becoming gloomier day by day, and now that the Brahmos have taken the field, the missionaries seem to be thinking that their prosperous days are numbered, and they must seek for "fresh fields and pastures new."

RAM MOHUN ROY AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

(a) *The Sati Rite.*

Ram Mohun Roy is generally known as a religious reformer, but he was a social reformer as well. Indeed, religious and social matters are so intermixed that it is sometimes difficult to determine where religion ends and social reform begins. The Sati rite, or the burning alive of a Hindu woman on the funeral pyre of her husband, is a matter of this difficult nature. When the English

first came to rule the country, they were shocked at this cruel inhuman practice prevailing so very widely. But on being told that it formed part and parcel of the Hindu religion as current in Bengal, they did not deem it proper to interfere. But as the practice, revolting as it is to human feelings went on increasing, some gentlemen, who had the good of the country at heart, took the matter into their earnest consideration with a view to devising some means for the abolition thereof. The credit of first moving in this painful but none the less momentous matter is due to the Serampore Missionaries, with Carey as the head and prime mover. In 1814, when India was ruled by Lord Wellesley, the Missionaries sent out ten agents to travel from village to village within a radius of 30 miles round Calcutta, to collect information, and after sufficient inquiries were made, they duly brought the matter to the notice of the Governor-General; but as Lord Wellesley was to retire a week later, he did not feel free to take action. Accordingly, the matter dropped for the time being, and it was not revived until 1818, when Ram Mohun Roy published his first tract against the Sati rite. It was originally written in Bengali. This was a very able and learned discourse; and the author, thinking that the arguments contained in it might tend to alter the notions which some European gentlemen entertained on this subject, lost no time in giving to the public, also, an English translation thereof. As the attack therein made on the practice

was alarmingly violent, it excited great opposition among orthodox Hindus, who were not willing to give up their time-worn customs and beliefs; and with a view to combat the views so cleverly and forcibly put forth by Ram Mohun Roy, they started a newspaper called the CHANDRIKA under the editorship of a very learned Brahmin of the right orthodox type.

It is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine how and when the practice originated. The great Father of History, Herodotus, says that some such custom was in vogue among the Crestonians, but he is silent as to any such custom having prevailed among the Indians. It seems that the Indian practice came into being long after the time of Herodotus; and it is certain that it did not exist in Vedic times. Even when the *Aranyaka* was compiled, it had not obtained currency in the country; but it would appear that it was quite in vogue from before the invasion of India by Alexander the Great. Not only does the Vedas make no mention of the practice, but Manu, also, whose authority as a law-giver stands unrivalled, does not at all countenance or even hint at it. Speaking of the Hindu widow, he says:—

Let her continue *till death* forgiving all injuries, performing harsh duties, avoiding every sensual pleasure, and cheerfully practising the incomparable rules of virtue which have been followed by such women as were devoted to one only husband.

True it is that Angira, like some other Rishis, has said:—

That a woman who, on the death of her husband, ascends the burning pile with him, is exalted in Heaven, as equal to Arundhati.

As Ram Mohun Roy, by his second Essay on the subject which appeared in 1820, has shown, these words of Angira have been explained by the greatest Smriti writer in Bengal, the renowned Pandit Raghunandan, as conveying merely the exaggerated praise of Sati. Indeed, Ram Mohun Roy's second Essay settles once for all this fact that, according to Hindu Shastras, a woman, on her husband's death, has generally two courses before her to follow, namely, she may die with her lord, or she may adopt an ascetic life. The former, being revolting to human feelings, is generally renounced in favour of the latter, which is certainly the better and the more reasonable course of the two. But as, by Hindu law as current in Bengal, a widow was deemed competent to have, and hold for her life, the estate of her husband dying without male issue, there were not found wanting bad men who, to gain their selfish ends, would be only too ready to remove her from the way in order to let the next heir of the deceased come in at once. It seems that some such evil motives had a great deal to do in introducing this strange custom of Sati.

But when the advocates of Sati found that they could not support their contention by referring to law, they shifted their ground and continued their controversy by saying that, even supposing that the practice was not supported by law, it was quite sanctioned by custom, and as such practice had been in use for a long time, it could not be given up. But this ground,

too, was not tenable seeing that such a custom could not be called a sound legal custom, and Ram Mohun argued that it is only customs of the latter kind which deserve the high praise bestowed on custom by Manu. As for the custom referred to by the advocates of Sati, it was one of those customs which was more honoured in the breach than in the observance. Thus, the triumph of Ram Mohun Roy was complete.

Fortunately for him, a great and good man was then at the helm of the State. When, after suitable inquiries, Lord William Bentinck found to his satisfaction that the Sati rite was, so far from being supported by law and good custom, directly opposed to them, and that it did not at all form a part of the Hindu religion as current in the land, he in consultation with his Hon'ble colleagues, passed in the year of grace, 1829, a Regulation declaring the practice of Sati illegal, and the persons taking part in it punishable in the Criminal Courts. This moral victory proved an infinite source of joy to Ram Mohun Roy, and he hastened to offer thanks to Heaven whose

“protecting arm,” has rescued our weaker sex from cruel murder under the cloak of religion, and our character, as a people, from the contempt and pity with which it had been regarded on account of this custom by all civilised nations on the face of the globe

(b) *Kulinism*.

Polygamy, shocking as it is, was badly rampant in the time of Ram Mohun Roy. He plainly saw that it was an evil practice and ought to be put a

stop to. In his excellent Essay on the *Ancient Rights of Females*, he observes:—

This horrible polygamy among Brahmins is directly contrary to the law given by ancient authors; for Yagnavalkya authorises second marriage while the first wife is alive, only under eight circumstances : 1st, The vice of drinking spirituous liquors. 2ndly, Incurable sickness. 3rdly, Deception. 4thly, Barrenness. 5thly, Extravagance. 6thly, The frequent use of offensive language. 7thly, Producing only female offspring. Or, 8thly, Manifestation of hatred towards her husband.

He also cites some other authorities to show that a Hindu is not legally free to take any number of wives, but that, as a matter of fact, during his wife's life-time, he cannot marry again except under certain specified circumstances. This is a sound and wholesome injunction, but it is seldom, if ever, obeyed. As the practice is, and has been, in use for a long time, a Hindu is at liberty to marry any number of wives, no matter that he has one living. Although Kulinism was damnably prevalent among Brahmins and was doing immense mischief in Hindu society, still Ram Mohun Roy did not deem it prudent to disturb it except by making a few sensible remarks against it. In fact, the custom had got so firmly rooted in Hindu minds and had had such long continued use in its favour that, perhaps, he thought that the time had not come for its removal from the social system, and, accordingly, did not worry himself much about it. That well-known statesman and lawyer, Thomas Babington Macaulay, also seemed to have thought in the same way : and when it was suggested to him, very probably by Ram Mohun Roy himself and a few others like him, that polygamy might be put a stop to by a

legislative enactment, he did not follow up the suggestion but left the matter to the solvent influence of time and education; and it is gratifying to observe that his foresight is on a fair way to being practically fulfilled. Now-a-days, only a few educated men are to be found in this country who have more wives than one. In fact, monogamy has become the rule, and it is only in exceptional cases and under peculiar circumstances that this rule is broken through.

(c) *Widow Marriage.*

Widow marriage, which under certain circumstances is very desirable, also attracted the far-seeing attention of Ram Mohun Roy. But it seems that he did not in all seriousness take the matter in hand, evidently on some such consideration as had dissuaded him from earnestly interfering with the objectionable practice of polygamy. The time had not then come for active interference: nor had it come even when the venerable Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar fought tooth and nail for it. True it is that an Act of the Legislature had been passed, legalising such marriages; but except among a handful of men who are a drop in the ocean, it has remained almost a dead letter.

HIS VIEW OF EDUCATION

Being a highly educated man himself, it was only natural that Ram Mohun Roy should have had more than ordinary regard for education. In fact, he set a very high value on it and very properly thought that the more a nation improves itself by education,

the higher it rises among nations. By education he evidently meant good practical education—education which fills the mind with useful knowledge. Though a well-known Sanskrit scholar, Ram Mohun Roy had very little regard for the niceties of Sanskrit grammar, or the subtleties of Hindu philosophy. Accordingly, when, in 1823, it was proposed to establish a Sanskrit school under Hindu Pandits for the purpose of imparting such knowledge as might be derived from a study of Sanskrit grammar and the Darshanas, as Hindu philosophy is collectively called—knowledge which was already pretty prevalent in India, at least among a certain section of the Hindus—he entered a powerful protest against it, and in order to acquaint Government with his views, he addressed a letter to the then Governor-General, Lord Amherst. In that letter he very forcibly urged that if the improvement of the native population was the object of the Government, instead of affording them facilities for learning Sanskrit grammar and Hindu philosophy, it would far better fulfil its object by promoting a liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy, with other useful sciences, which might be well accomplished with the money sanctioned, by employing a few gentlemen of talent and learning educated in Europe and by providing a college furnished with necessary books, instruments and other apparatus. He, however, did not altogether condemn the study of Sanskrit, which, he admitted, has a value of its

own, as it enables one to get a deep insight into the rich and rare stores of Sanskrit literature—a literature which, as Heeran says, “ incontestably belongs to a highly cultivated people, whom we may with reason consider to have been the most informed of the East.” Such a study might, he thought, be well left to the keepers of *Tols* in the different parts of the country, who were engaged in teaching the Sanskrit language together with other branches of learning, which were intended to be taught in the proposed seminary ; and if their more diligent cultivation were desirable, it would be effectually promoted by holding out premiums and granting certain allowances to the most eminent Pandits, who had already undertaken on their own account to teach them, and who would, by such rewards, be stimulated to still greater exertions. The Government, it seems, was impressed by the arguments adduced by Ram Mohun Roy, and it was, principally, in consequence of the agitation set up by him that the foundation-stone of the building, intended for the Sanskrit College, was laid in the name of the Hindu College, and the Hindu College was located there together with the Sanskrit College. This Hindu College was intended to give instruction to Hindu boys and to Hindu boys alone, and had been established some years before. That great educationist and sincere well-wisher of this country, David Hare was the prime mover in the matter, and he found a very earnest co-adjutant in Ram Mohun Roy. Finding

that the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Sir Edward Hyde East, had the good of the land of his adoption at heart, these two selfless workers approached his Lordship with their scheme, and the result was the establishment of the said college in the year 1817, the main object of which was the spread of English education among the natives of the country. But though Ram Mohun Roy laboured very hard towards its establishment, still with characteristic disinterestedness he kept himself aloof from its management, fearing that the orthodox leaders of the Hindu community might not like to act in concert with a man whom they looked upon as no better than an outcast. Not satisfied with merely assisting David Hare and men of that sort for the spread of English education in this country, he himself established an English school of his own in the year 1822. Surely, Bengal owes a very huge debt of gratitude to Ram Mohun Roy for his efforts in the cause of English education.

Some time after the establishment of the Hindu College, there began the famous controversy between the Orientalists who advocated education in Oriental classics, and the Anglicists who were for imparting instruction through the medium of English. The former party was headed by that great antiquarian, James Prinsep of Prinsep Ghat fame, and the latter by that eminent historian, poet and essayist, Thomas Babington Macaulay (afterwards Lord Macaulay). The battle raged loud and long for more than a decade. Ram Mohun Roy, who always took part in

every movement that tended towards the amelioration of his country, ranged himself on the side of the Anglicists, and it was an open secret that he gave his powerful aid to those with whom he sided. The controversy was so very keen and each side so strong that it was long doubtful which side would come out victorious. Lord William Bentinck weighing the arguments on both sides and sincerely believing that the country greatly wanted English education for its improvement and edification, decided in favour of the Anglicists. It is very much to be regretted that Ram Mohun Roy did not live to see his laudable efforts crowned with complete success, as the Resolution of the Governor-General on the subject was not passed until the 7th May 1835, more than a year and half after his death.

Ram Mohun Roy was not only for educating the males, he was equally in favour of female education. In his advocacy of the latter he had the assured precedent of ancient India to support him. When the two grand Epics—the Ramayana and the Mahabharata—were written, Hindu women were not kept in seclusion. The Zenana system was quite unknown, and the members of the softer sex were allowed to appear in public and attend meetings on great occasions. Learning, too, was not a forbidden fruit to them, and the literature of the times furnishes us with the names of more than one lady who vied with the most learned men of that period in culture and religious knowledge. Gargi, Maitreyi and Lilavati

were well able to hold their own against any sage or savant of their times. In fact, female education was quite common in days of old, and it was only in later times that it fell into disuse. Ram Mohun Roy's advocacy of female education helped not a little towards drawing the attention of the public to it; but no tangible measure was taken in that direction until the arrival of Mr. Drinkwater Bethune. He came out as the Law Member of the Supreme Council in succession to the celebrated Macaulay. But though a lawyer by profession and calling, he was not slow to turn his attention to other matters, of which the one which mostly exercised his mind was the education of Indian women; and as he found some earnest natives to back him up, and also expected the countenance of Government, he entered into the subject more deeply, and, at last, succeeded in establishing a female school in Calcutta, to which he lent his own honoured name. This very important event in the educational annals of Bengal took place in the year 1843, nearly fourteen years after the death of Ram Mohun Roy.

RAM MOHUN AS A POLITICIAN

Ram Mohun's interest was not confined to social reform and education. We have noticed his religious controversies both with orthodox Hindus and Christian Missionaries. But, as we shall see, he was far and away the ablest and the most wide-awake politician of his time. Nor did he cultivate the narrow and parochial patriotism of latter days. His patriotism

was broad-based on the doctrine of the solidarity of humanity and inspired by his passion for liberty. "He would be free or not be at all," wrote Mr. William Adam, a Baptist Missionary whose Association with Ram Mohun led him to adopt Unitarian opinions. He said:—

He would be free or not be at all... Love of freedom was perhaps the strongest passion of his soul,—freedom not of action merely, but of thought.....This tenacity of personal independence, this sensitive jealousy of the slightest approach to an encroachment on his mental freedom was accompanied with a very nice perception of the equal rights of others, even of those who differed most widely from him.

It was this love of liberty, says Mr. Ramanand Chatterjee in his brochure on *Ram Mohun Roy and Modern India* that was the source of all his political opinions and the mainspring of all his political activity. It made him take interest in and deeply sympathise with all political movements all over the world that had for their object the advancement of popular freedom. Mr. Chatterjee quotes some instances of Ram Mohun's cosmopolitan sympathies in the region of politics.

When the intelligence reached India that the people of Naples after extorting a constitution from their despotic king were crushed back into servitude by the Austrian troops, in obedience to the joint mandate of the crowned heads of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sardinia, and Naples, Ram Mohun felt it keenly.

In a letter to Mr. Buckingham, dated August 11, 1821, he wrote:—

I am afraid I must be under the necessity of denying myself the pleasure of your society this evening; more especially as my mind is depressed by the late news from Europe..... From the late unhappy news I am obliged to conclude that I shall not live to see liberty universally restored to the nations of Europe, and Asiatic nations, especially those that are European

colonies, possessed of a greater degree of the same blessing than what they now enjoy.

Under these circumstances I consider the cause of the Neapolitans as my own, and their enemies as ours. Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been, and never will be, ultimately successful.

"These noble words," says Miss Collett, "reveal how profoundly Ram Mohun felt with the Late Russell Lowell that "In the gain or loss of one race all the rest have equal claim"; and that

Wherever wrong is done
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding Sun,
That wrong is also done to us.

Ram Mohun's Persian weekly MIRAT-UL-AKBAR contained an article on "Ireland, the causes of its distress and discontent." In this he dwelt on the evils of absenteeism and the injustice of maintaining Protestant clergymen out of revenues wrung from the Roman Catholic inhabitants of Ireland. He said :—

How admirable is the observation of Saadi (on whom be mercy !)

Do not say that these rapacious ministers are the
well-wishers of his Majesty;
For in proportion as they augment the revenue of the
state, they diminish his popularity;
O statesman, apply the revenue of the King towards the
comfort of the people; then during their lives
they will be loyal to him.

When the news of the establishment of constitutional Government in Spain reached India, continues Mr. Chatterjee, he gave a public dinner at the Town Hall. Some months before his departure for England, news reached Calcutta of the latest French Revolution, and, "so great was his enthusiasm that," we are told, "he could think and talk of nothing else !" He viewed it as a triumph of liberty and rejoiced accordingly. On

his voyage to England he landed at the Cape for only an hour or two. "Returning on board he met with a nasty accident. The gangway ladder had not been properly secured, and he got a serious fall, from which he was lame for eighteen months afterwards and indeed never finally recovered. But no bodily suffering could repress his mental ardour. Two French frigates, under the revolutionary flag, the glorious tri-colour, were lying in Table Bay ; and lame as he was, he would insist on visiting them. The sight of these colours seemed to kindle his enthusiasm, and to render him insensible to pain." During the days of the Reform Bill agitation in England, he considered the struggle between the reformers and anti-reformers as a struggle between liberty and oppression throughout the world.

We must now pass on to a consideration of Ram Mohun's views on the politics of his own country. He publicly avowed that in the event of the Reform Bill being defeated, he would renounce his connection with England.* His attitude to Moslem rule and Moslem society was unprejudiced and paternal as will be seen from a perusal of his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons. He had high respect for Moslem character and their general ability. But his faith in British character and the possibilities of British Rule for the uplift of India dominated his political convictions. He writes in his *Autobiography* :—

.... I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindustan, with a feeling of great aversion to the establish-

* Ram Mohun Roy and Modern India.

ment of the British Power in India. When I had reached the age of twenty, my father recalled me, and restored me to his favour; after which I first saw and began to associate with Europeans, and soon after made myself tolerably acquainted with their laws and form of government. Finding them generally more intelligent, more steady and moderate in their conduct, I gave up my prejudice against them, and became inclined in their favour, feeling persuaded that their rule, though a foreign yoke, would lead more speedily and surely to the amelioration of the native inhabitants;.....

He concluded his "Final Appeal to the Christian Public."

"by offering up thanks to the supreme Disposer of the events of this universe, for having unexpectedly delivered this country from the long-continued tyranny of its former Rulers, and placed it under the Government of the English,—a nation who not only are blessed with the enjoyment of civil and political liberty, but also interest themselves in promoting liberty and social happiness, as well as free inquiry into literary and religious subjects, among those nations to which their influence extends."

It is the prospect of civil and religious liberty that decides his allegiance!

Ram Mohun never differentiated between Hindus and Mohammedans so far as their political interests were concerned. In the excellent brochure to which we have already drawn attention, Mr. Chatterjee points out how farsighted Ram Mohun was in his views touching the fundamentals of Indian politics.

A new Jury Act came into operation in the year 1827. On August 18th, 1828, Ram Mohun wrote to Mr. J. Crawford and entrusted to him petitions against the Act for presentation to both Houses of Parliament, signed by Hindus and Mohammedans. He thus concisely stated the grounds of grievance:—

In his famous Jury Bill, Mr. Wynn, the late President of the Board of Control, has by introducing religious distinctions into the judicial system of this country, not only afforded just grounds for dissatisfaction among the Natives in general, but

has excited much alarm in the breast of every one conversant with political principles. Any Natives, either Hindu or Mohammedan, are rendered by this Bill subject to judicial trial by Christians, either European or Native, while Christians, including Native converts, are exempted from the degradation of being tried either by a Hindu or Mussalman juror, however high he may stand in the estimation of society. This Bill also denies both to Hindus and Mohammedans the honor of a seat in the Grand Jury even in the trial of fellow Hindus or Mussalmans. This is the sum total of Mr. Wynn's late Jury Bill, of which we bitterly complain.

Ram Mohun went on to suggest a possibility which is by no means so remote now as when he wrote:—

Supposing that 100 years hence the Native character becomes elevated from constant intercourse with Europeans and the acquirement of general and political knowledge as well as of modern arts and sciences, is it possible that they will not have the spirit as well as the inclination to resist effectually any unjust and oppressive measures serving to degrade them in the scale of society? It should not be lost sight of that the position of India is very different from that of Ireland, to any quarter of which an English fleet may suddenly convey a body of troops that may force its way in the requisite direction and succeed in suppressing every effort of a refractory spirit. Were India to share one-fourth of the knowledge and energy of that country, she would prove from her remote situation, her riches and her vast population, either useful and profitable as a willing province, an ally of the British empire, or troublesome and annoying as a determined enemy.

In common with those who seem partial to the British rule from the expectation of future benefits arising out of the connection, I necessarily feel extremely grieved in often witnessing Acts and Regulations passed by Government without consulting or seeming to understand the feelings of its Indian subjects and without considering that this people have had for more than half a century the advantage of being ruled by and associated with an enlightened nation, advocates of liberty and promoters of knowledge.

The letter quoted above is remarkable, as Mr. Chatterjee says, for the far-sighted glance into the future which it reveals. Here in germ is to be found the national aspiration which is now breaking forth

into demands for a greater measure of Self-Government than the people at present enjoy. Ram Mohun's English biographer observes that—

The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Ram Mohun's mind: and he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves. Here again Ram Mohun stands forth as the tribune and prophet of New India.

RAM MOHUN ROY AS A LAWYER

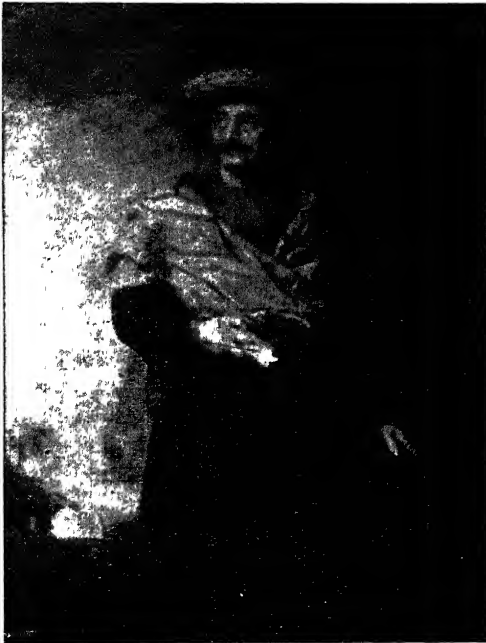
Although neither law nor politics was Ram Mohun Roy's forte, still there arose occasions on which he had to express his views regarding the administration of the country in one or other of its departments. When, for instance, the question of the renewal of the Charter of the Honourable East India Company was on the *tapis*, and several individuals connected with India were examined as witnesses on the subject, the authorities in England wished Ram Mohun Roy, also a respectable gentleman of the land, to give his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons. His evidence, which possesses high value and importance, shows what a thorough statesman he was, and it places beyond doubt the very wide and extensive range of his mind. This evidence has since been published in pamphlet form under the title of "Exposition of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India." As to the merit of this performance, it is sufficient to say that it embraces some of the most important questions relating to the administration of India, such as the reform

of Courts, the jurisdiction of the country's courts over Europeans, the Jury system, the separation of the executive and judicial offices, the codification of laws, the advisability of consulting the people in matters of legislation, the establishment of a native militia, the larger employment of natives, the age and education of civil servants, the amelioration of the condition of the tenantry and the framing of laws for their protection, and the last, though not least, the permanent settlement; and it is needless to say that every word, which fell from his lips, deserves to be carefully read and considered by our Rulers as well as by our patriots. As to the manner in which a Code of Criminal Law should be framed suitable to the wants of the people, he thus expressed himself:—

A Code of Criminal Law for India should be founded as far as possible on those principles which are common to and acknowledged by the different sects and tribes inhabiting the country. It ought to be simple in its principles, clear in its arrangement and precise in its definition, so that it may be established as a standard of criminal justice in itself and not stand in need of explanation by a reference to any other books of authority, either Mohammedan or Christian.

HIS PASSION FOR LIBERTY

As we have observed, one great feature of Ram Mohun Roy's character, which strikes one on reading his works and letters, is his ardent love of freedom. Liberty of thought and liberty of action he considered the only sure paths leading to the progress and happiness of a people. Ram Mohun believed that a free Press is one of the best safe-guards of liberty and his passion for liberty was uncommon in those days. In 1823, an occasion arose for the exercise of this laudable passion



RAJA RAM MOHUN ROY

on his part. Lord Hastings left India in that year, and Lord Amherst was appointed to fill his place. But as the latter had not arrived in India when his predecessor left it, Mr. Adam, the senior member of the Supreme Council, acted as Governor-General till the arrival of the permanent incumbent. But short as Mr. Adam's tenure of office was, he made himself very unpopular by decreeing the removal of the liberty of the Press. This is how this unpleasant affair came to pass. Mr. Silk Buckingham, the Editor of the CALCUTTA JOURNAL, in an evil hour made some severe comments on official acts and officials in his paper. This appeared to the Government as very unseemly, and the provisional Governor-General ordered his removal, and he was actually deported from the country. But the matter did not end here. The Government took it into its serious consideration and, on the 14th March, the Acting Governor-General passed a Rule and Ordinance—as it was called in the official language of the time, curbing the freedom of the Press. According to the Act of Parliament, 13 Geo. III, Cap. 63, every Regulation made by the Governor-General had, as the law then stood, to be sanctioned and registered by the Supreme Court before it passed into law. Leave was obtained by Mr. Fergusson, Barrister-at-Law, on behalf of Mr. Buckingham for protesting against sanction being given to the Rule and Ordinance by the Supreme Court. A Memorial signed by six well-known Indians was also presented to the

Court. It was from the pen of Ram Mohun Roy, who was also one of the signatories, and it was a well-written and well-reasoned document. This Memorial, as has been said, may be regarded "as the Areopagitica of Indian History. Alike in diction and in argument it forms a noble land-mark in the progress of English culture in the East."

Says Miss Collett :

The appeal is one of the noblest pieces of English to which Ram Mohun put his hand. Its stately periods and not less stately thought recall the eloquence of the great orators of a century ago. In a language and style for ever associated with the glorious vindication of liberty, it invokes against the arbitrary exercise of British power the principles and traditions which are distinctive of British History.

The matter was heard by the Hon'ble Sir Francis Macnaghten, the sole acting Judge of the Court ; but unfortunately for the people his Lordship allowed the Rule and Ordinance to be registered. When the Memorialists found that their prayer, though fair and reasonable, was not heard, they got up a petition to His Majesty King George IV, and sent it to England. This petition, too, was written by Ram Mohun Roy. In fact, he was the guiding spirit in the matter and bore the brunt of the whole work. The petition is a remarkable piece of document and is certainly a masterpiece of its kind.

The petition, however, did not prove successful at the time, but it certainly lent some force to the cause which bore fruit some time later. This happened when, on the retirement of Lord Bentinck, Sir Charles Metcalfe acted as Provisional

Governor-General before the arrival of the next permanent ruler, Lord Auckland. Thus, what had been taken away by one temporary Governor-General in 1823 was fully restored by another of the same fraternity in 1836. As a token of gratitude for the entire liberty of the Press which Sir Charles allowed, the inhabitants of Calcutta named the public library of their city "The Metcalfe Hall," which is now known as the Imperial Library.

LAW OF INHERITANCE

Though not a lawyer by profession, Ram Mohun Roy knew more of Hindu law than many a professional man. He had read with care most of the Smritis with their commentaries,—the earliest as well as the latest. Thus, he came to know both the ancient and the modern law, and was well able to institute a comparison between them. On comparing them he found that on the question of inheritance of females, the modern law had done great injustice to them. This excited his righteous indignation, which found expression in an Essay on the subject in 1822. He showed by quoting chapter and verse from the Shastras that while, by the ancient law, the mother was entitled to a share equal to that of her son in the property left by her husband, and the daughter to one-fourth, the modern law had almost deprived them of such vested rights, if they might be so called.

The necessity for writing the Essay arose in this way. During the early part of the nineteenth century, the law relating to the power of alienation of

Hindus over ancestral property under the Bengal school was anything but settled. In the reported cases from 1792 to 1816, we find that the Courts favoured the absolute power of alienation by the father. In 1816, however, the law was almost broken through by the case of *Bhawanee Churan vs. The Heirs of Ramkant*, which practically overruled all previous rulings, and declared that the father's power was limited. In 1829 and 1830, the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Sir Charles Edward Grey, repeatedly expressed his opinion against the father's power in several cases, more especially in the case of *Barada Persad vs. Taraprasad Banerjee*. Finding that the highest Tribunal in the land went wrong in its view of the law on a very important subject, Ram Mohun Roy wrote an Essay on the "Rights of Hindus over Ancestral Property" in which he clearly showed that the law, as expounded and enunciated by his Lordship, was the very reverse of right. He proved that the Hindu law, as current in Bengal, gave absolute power to a person over his ancestral property and that he could do with it as he pleased. His able exposition seemed to have had its desired effect, for we find that, in 1831, the law was settled once for all by the celebrated case of *Jagamohan Roy vs. Srimati Nemoj Dassee*, in which the same Chief Justice, Sir Charles Grey, referred the matter to the Judges of the Sudder Dewany Adawlut who, after mature consideration, declared that a Hindu father

had absolute power over ancestral property. Later on, the Privy Council declared the law in the case of *Nagabushana Ammal vs. Gopoo Nadaraja Chetty*, in the following terms: "Throughout Bengal a man who is the absolute owner of property may now dispose of it by Will as he pleases, whether it be ancestral or not." Thus, it seems that Ram Mohun Roy, by his Essay, did yeoman's service towards restoring the law to its original correct state.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BRAHMO SAMAJ

We have seen that Ram Mohun was continually fighting against idolatry and polytheism. Many earnest and pious men gathered round him, and the ranks of his 'Salvation Army' went on increasing. He had founded the *Atmiya Sabha* for divine worship and had also established the *Ved Mandir* for the study of Vedic lore, as well as some institutions for debate and discussion on religious and social subjects. But the main object of his life still remained to be fulfilled, and he was now earnest in materialising it. It is not enough to *believe* in one God, it is also necessary to *worship* Him. For this purpose a special Church was supplied in the year 1828, when the Brahmo Samaj was established. It was on the 25th of August 1828 that Ram Mohun and his friends opened a place for public worship in Lower Chitpore Road, Calcutta. It was duly consecrated as the Adi Brahmo Samaj on 23rd January 1830. It was to be a cosmopolitan house of prayer.

This Samaj was not sectarian in its character, it was established on a broad and liberal basis. Ram Mohun Roy's was a universal religion which recognised no distinction of colour, creed or caste. He invited all "for the worship and adoration of the Eternal, Unsearchable, Immutable Being, who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe," to his Church, where the Supreme Being and He alone was to be worshipped under "no name, designation or title, peculiarly used by any man or set of men to any particular Being;" and he enjoined in the trust deed that:

No religion should be reviled or slightly or contemptuously spoken of or alluded to in his church, and that worship should be conducted in such way as would tend to promote the contemplation of the Supreme Being as well as to promote charity, morality, piety, benevolence, virtue and for strengthening of the bond of union between men of all religious persuasions and creeds.

Ram Mohun Roy had a marked contempt for morbid austerity, sentimentalism and that false aloofness which shuns mankind; and he clearly showed from the sacred writings of the Hindus that the highest religion was quite compatible with the duties of the world, and that the so-called worldly life of a householder, so far from being an insuperable bar, was well calculated to lead to salvation. All that he thought necessary to attain to a life of godliness is sincerely and devoutly to contemplate on the One on High and to constantly practise in life, benevolence, morality, and, above all, that divine quality which blesseth him that gives and him that receives.

Thus was the Brahmo Samaj of modern India established for the worship of "the one Brahm without a second." In fact the mission of Ram Mohun Roy through the Brahmo Samaj was, in the words of Pandit Sivanath Sastri

to call his countrymen to discard idolatry and come to the worship of the one true God. His duty was that of a sturdy pioneer, working single-handed to clear away a mass of popular prejudice and prepare the way for those who were coming after him. His work was mainly negative and re-formatory and not positive and constructive. The mission he unconsciously fulfilled and to which he was called was to combine in the reawakened spiritual aspirations of the people, the spiritual ideals of the East and the West, a mission which the Brahmo Samaj is still pursuing in this land. For the answer to deeper questions of the nature and the attributes of the Supreme, he turned to Hindu writings; for his thorough knowledge of them had convinced him of the deeply and truly spiritual character of their speculations. He turned away from the extra-cosmic and anthropomorphic conceptions of the Deity familiar to old Judaism, and largely reproduced in current forms of orthodox Christianity and Mohamedanism, but accepted with profound admiration the moral and social ideals of the Christian faith. Summarily speaking, he derived his ideas on the spiritual side from Hindu sources; but his passion for Unitarianism was derived from Mahomedanism and many of his moral ideas he got from the precepts of Jesus. It was thus that the root ideas of the three systems were incorporated in the fundamental conceptions of a Universal Religion.

Among the men of light and leading who helped Ram Mohun Roy in raising the Brahmo Church and stood by him through good report and evil report in his laudable work, the names of Ram Chandra Vidyabagish, Kali Nath Roy, the two famous Tagores, Dwaraka Nath and Prasanna Kumar, Tara Chand Chakravarti and Chandra Sekhar De deserve special mention. Ram Chandra Vidyabagish took the greatest interest and laboured the hardest. He was the minister of the Samaj from its very beginning,

and when after Ram Mohun Roy's demise, others deserted the Church, he alone kept it alive, till Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore, accepted the Brahmo faith and took over charge from his hands. The Maharishi found a very able and worthy co-adjutant in Keshab Chandra Sen. Latterly, Keshab Chandra abandoned the Adi Brahmo Samaj and established a Samaj of his own, which is flourishing side by side with the parent tree. The Brahmo faith, liberal as it is in its principles, has, to a considerable extent, arrested the progress of Christianity in India, more especially in Bengal.

RAM MOHUN ROY IN ENGLAND

Now that he had accomplished the dear object of his life and established the Brahmo Samaj on a firm and permanent basis, Ram Mohun was on the look-out for an opportunity to go to the "Far West," which he had so ardently longed to do; and as good luck would have it, a glorious opportunity presented itself ere long for the due fulfilment of his desire. The Emperor of Delhi,—now reduced to a mere shadow of a sovereign,—having taken umbrage at some acts of the powerful East India Company prejudicial to his interests, wanted to send an ambassador to His Majesty the King of England, for the purpose of having his grievances removed, and as Ram Mohun Roy was, by his ability and experience, eminently fitted to go on such an important mission, he was selected by His Majesty, who, to add dignity and importance to the person of his representative,

conferred upon Ram Mohun Roy the title of Raja. Besides representing the Imperial grievances, Ram Mohun Roy had two other objects in view, namely, first, to be present at the approaching discussion in the House of Commons for the renewal of the East India Company's Charter; and secondly, to present memorials in favour of the abolition of the Sati rite, which he took with him from India, and to counter-act the agitation carried on by powerful leaders of orthodox Hindu society.

Ram Mohun Roy sailed for England on the 15th November 1830, accompanied by his foster-son, Raja Ram Roy, and two Hindu servants, Ram Ratan Mukherji and Ramhari Das. They sailed in the *Albion* which was bound for Liverpool. At the time of which we are speaking, a voyage to Europe was a very long and tedious affair, and it was, therefore, no wonder that the ship did not reach its destination till April 1832, that is, nearly a year and a half after. The voyage was anything but peaceful. While the ship was steering its course over the Indian Ocean, it was overtaken by a terrible storm and was thereby placed in such a critical position that most of the crew and the passengers had given up all hope of life. But, at last, the storm subsided. The dreaded "Kalapani" (*Black Water*), against the crossing of which Hindu custom and superstition had placed an almost insuperable barrier, was passed in safety. Surely, this was no ordinary feat for a Hindu of rank and position like Ram Mohun Roy, and we cannot

but admire his moral courage in having performed it in the face of such serious opposition. By this time Ram Mohun Roy had established his reputation as a scholar, philosopher, and reformer. He had written Bengali works on the *Vedanta*, translated into English some of the *Upanishads*, defeated some very noted Christian Missionaries in religious controversies, and established the Brahmo-Samaj or Theistic Church. He had, given his strong support to the Governor-General, Lord William Bentinck for the abolition of *Sati* or the burning of Hindu widows on the funeral pyre of husbands. He had also won the warmest regard of that Prince of Indian Missionaries, Dr. Alexander Duff, and, as a matter of fact, won a very high repute. When such a remarkable man, "the great Apostle of the East," whose name and fame had long preceded him to Europe, reached the shores of England on the 8th April, it is not surprising that he should have received a cordial welcome from the great men of that land of freedom. The Raja landed at Liverpool and took up his lodgings at one of the hotels there. His arrival in England excited considerable interest. No sooner was his advent known in that famous City than almost every man of distinction in the place hastened to call on him. One of the first visits he received was from the three sons of Roscoe the celebrated historian of the Medici. They came, not merely on their own account but to convey to him the "affectionate greetings" of their distinguished

father, whom paralytic affection had for years confined to his apartments. Ram Mohun Roy lost no time in calling on the old man, who, though forbidden by his doctor to receive any visitors made an exception in favour of the great Indian with whom he had before corresponded. The interview was deeply affecting, as it was their first and last meeting on this side of Eternity. Ram Mohun Roy heard of Roscoe's death while residing in London.

The first public place he attended at Liverpool was Mr. Grundy's Unitarian Chapel. The sermon was proper to the occasion, in exposition of the duty of unlimited charity in our judgments of the creeds of other men, and of their principles of belief. He listened to it with the utmost attention and afterwards expressed himself to be very much pleased with it. After the sermon was over, the congregation, instead of dispersing, thronged up every avenue to get a near view of him; and it was not till they had heard him address them in their own language and shaken hands with him that they would be prevailed upon to allow him to return.

After staying a few days at Liverpool, Ram Mohun Roy started for London. On his way thither, he halted at Manchester to see the great factories.

On the very night he reached London, Mr. Bentham, the great philosopher and law reformer, leaving his lonely hermitage, where he had ensconced himself in order that he might consecrate, to quote

his own words, "every moment of his life to the service of mankind," came all the way round to see him. Thus, a very warm friendship sprang up between these two great minds, which lasted until it was dissolved by death. The Englishman was proud of his Indian friend and gladly addressed him as an intensely admired and dearly beloved fellow servant in the service of humanity. But the venerable founder of the Utilitarian School was not the only great man that paid the Raja the honour of a visit. In fact, many of the distinguished Londoners honoured him and sought his friendship. Though many of the proud Lords wanted only to lionize him, yet there were not a few who appreciated him, and sought his company with a view to acquiring information regarding India. Among these were Mr. (afterwards Lord) Brougham, Sir Henry Stratchey and Sir Charles Forbes. With Brougham, then only known as the great advocate of popular education and of the abolition of slavery, Raja Ram Mohun Roy lived on terms of the closest intimacy.

But not only was the Raja honoured by the learned, he was also honoured even by Royalty itself. He was duly presented to the King, who gave him a cordial reception, and at the grand ceremony of the Coronation, he was given a seat by the side of the Ambassadors of the Crowned Heads of Europe. On the opening of the London Bridge, he was invited by His Majesty to the grand dinner party which was

given in celebration of that event. The Court of Directors, though they refused to recognise his embassy and his title, treated him with honour. They entertained him at a public dinner on the 6th July, in the name of the Honourable East India Company at the London Tavern.

The Raja, active and energetic as he certainly was, quite busied himself while in England. He gave his evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Revenue and Judicial systems of India, presented petitions to the said House in the matter of the abolition of the Sati rite, and had the satisfaction of being present there, when the appeal against such abolition was rejected on the 11th July, 1832. Thus, he succeeded in attaining the two minor objects of his mission, though he failed to achieve the main one, for which he had gone, namely, the restoration of some provinces in the vicinity of Delhi to the Emperor; but this failure, it may be observed, was mainly due to the weakness and indecision of the aggrieved party himself.

While in England, Raja Ram Mohun Roy was taken care of by some English families, not only as a distinguished guest but also as a friend. Of these families, the most notable was the family of his most intimate friend, David Hare, who has done more for the mental and moral improvement of the natives of India than any other foreigner. There he became acquainted among others with Dr. Lant Carpenter, who afterwards wrote an excellent memoir of him.

This Dr. Carpenter was the father of Miss Mary Carpenter, whose name has almost become a household word in this distant land. She was then quite in her prime, and as she was well able to appreciate real sterling merit wherever it was found, began to cherish deep regard for Raja Ram Mohun Roy, so much so that she there and then conceived a very strong desire to see the wonderland which had given birth to such a great personality. But this desire she could not fulfil until the year 1866; and though her stay in Bengal was not long, she had done excellent work among the people.

THE LAST SCENE

After a short sojourn in France, where he was the recipient of Royal favours, the Raja's health began to fail. He had been invited to visit Bristol and to take up his residence at the house of Miss Castle—a ward of Dr. Carpenter—in the neighbourhood of that city. In broken health he started for Bristol, accompanied by Miss Hare, the daughter of his esteemed friend, David Hare, who had resided with her uncle in Bedford Square, in the early part of September, to spend a few weeks at Stapleton Grove, intending to proceed thence to Devonshire, to pass the winter there. Nine days after his arrival, he was attacked with fever. Drs. Pritchard and Garrick attended upon him. Medicine afforded him, however, only temporary relief. His fever returned with redoubled vigour, and grew into what the native physicians would call *Bikar*. The delirium was

followed by a stupor from which he never recovered, and he breathed his last a little after 2 a. m., on the 27th September, in the presence of his foster-son Rajaram, and his Hindu servants. Ram Mohun Roy died in peace and, even while lying cold and lifeless, his body had "a beautiful majestic look." Hindu that he was, Ram Mohun Roy's body should have been cremated according to Hindu rites; but, as a matter of fact, the custom prevalent in that distant land was observed and the body, instead of being reduced to ashes, was consigned to earth. He was buried on the 18th October in a retired spot in a shrubbery, whence, on the 29th of May 1843, his remains were removed to the cemetery of Arno's Vale near Bristol, where a tomb was erected over his grave in the early part of the following year by his friend, Dwaraka Nath Tagore, with the following inscription :—

Beneath this stone rest the remains of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. A conscientious and steadfast believer in the unity of the Godhead, he consecrated his life with entire devotion to the worship of the Divine Spirit alone. To great natural talents he united a thorough mastery of many languages and early distinguished himself as one of the greatest scholars of the day. His unwearied labours to promote the social, moral and physical condition of the people of India, his earnest endeavours to suppress idolatry and *Sati* rite, and his constant zealous advocacy of whatever tended to advance the glory of God and welfare of man live in the grateful remembrance of his countrymen. This tablet records the sorrow and pride with which his memory is cherished by his descendants.

The noble tribute to the great deceased is not in any way over-coloured; it represents the real state of things and portrays the Raja in his true colours.

The spot, where stands the memorial of the Raja, is to be regarded, as one of his countrymen has beautifully said, "a sacred place for Hindu pilgrimage," and as a matter of fact, it is almost invariably visited by every Hindu sojourner in England.

CONCLUSION

Ram Mohun Roy was a remarkable writer. Indeed, he wielded a powerful pen and always used it for noble causes. But powerful as his pen was, it was not confined to one language but extended to several others as well. Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian, Arabic and, last though not least English, all came within its range. But his mother-tongue was the one in which he wrote the largest. He wrote several works in that language and gave it a form and finish which has since become a thing of beauty. It is impossible within the limited space at our command to deal at any appreciable length with the many-sided activities of so voluminous a writer as Ram Mohun Roy. As has been said in the preceding pages, he wrote in many languages and on all subjects of varying interest. Songs and poems, political and religious discourses, problems of education and sociology, legal and theological controversies, all alike engaged the multiform energy of this great pioneer of modern civilisation in India.



MAHARSHI DEVENDRANATH TAGORE

Maharshi Devendranath Tagore

INTRODUCTION

MAHARSHI Devendranath Tagore was the second great leader of the Brahma Samaj movement, the first being Raja Ram Mohun Roy and the third Brahmananda Kesav Chandra Sen. His followers held him in such high estimation that a large body of them, even when they were parting from them on account of certain differences, the nature of which will appear from the following sketch, conferred on him the title of 'Maharshi' (meaning 'a great Sage'.) His learning, his great piety, and the profoundly meditative cast of his mind made him appear to them as a modern representative of the great sages of ancient India. And their verdict has been accepted by the nation. Even after retirement from active life, the Maharshi continued to be frequently and reverentially visited by all classes of people, orthodox and heterodox, from all parts of the country, and even by distinguished visitors from foreign countries. And now, long after his death, he is,—as he must be for a long time yet,—spoken of with the deepest respect by all who know what he has been and what he has done.

FAMILY AND PARENTAGE

The Maharshi belongs to a high class family of Brahmanas, the Bandyopadhyayas or Banerjis, the descendants of Bhatta Narayana, one of the five Brahmanas said to have been brought by Adi Sura, King of Bengal, about the end of the tenth century, from Kannuj, to celebrate a sacrifice for him, the native priests of Bengal in those days having forgotten Vedic rites through the influence of Buddhism. But the Maharshi's immediate ancestors had been excommunicated, in later Muhammadan times, for some breach of caste rules, through the influence of a Hindu potentate, Raja Krishna Chandra Ray of Krishnagar in the district of Nadia. From that time the Tagores (a surname meaning 'Deities') have been known as Pirali Brahmanas. 'Pir Ali' is the name of a Muhammadan, who is said to have been instrumental in getting the Tagores excommunicated. However, the family never took the excommunication very seriously, and instead of becoming Mussalmans, which was what their enemies wanted, have conformed to all the rites and practices essential to high class Brahmanas. There are two principal branches of the family,—the one of Pathuriaghata (Calcutta) and the other of Jorasanko (another division of Calcutta.) The former conforms to orthodoxy while the latter has mostly embraced Brahmaism in its Hindu or conservative form. The family is distinguished for its great enlightenment, philanthropy and public spirit. The Maharshi's

father, Dwarakanath Tagore, called in his time Prince Dwarkanath for his 'lavish expenditure,' was a great friend of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, the founder of the Brahma Samaj, and supported the movement both before and after the death of the Raja. It was he who built the beautiful mausoleum at Bristol, (England), in memory of the Raja. It may be said that it was from the hands of his father that the Maharshi took up the Brahma Samaj movement and raised it from a moribund state to a great power in the land. But the great factor in the formation of the Maharshi's character seems to have been neither his father nor his mother, but his grandmother, the mother of his father, a lady of singular piety and strength of character. Up to his eighteenth year, when the lady died, he was under her direct influence, and it was her death, felt to be the loss of his greatest earthly friend, which proved the turning point of his life and drew his mind forcibly to the realities of the spiritual world.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

Devendranath was born in 1817 in his family house at Jorasanko, Calcutta, and was the eldest of the three male children. He was educated first in the school founded by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and then in the Hindu College, 'which was in those days an educational institution of some standing and repute.' Though trained, both at school and college, in the midst of disintegrating forces, the influence of his grandmother's pious orthodoxy long kept him a

believer in the current forms of Hinduism. This influence he describes in touching terms in his *Autobiography*. He says:—

She was a deeply religious woman. Every day she used to bathe in the Ganges very early in the morning; and every day she used to weave garlands of flowers with her own hands for the *Shalagram* (a piece of stone worshipped as a symbol of Vishnu). Sometimes she used to take a vow of solar adoration, giving offering to the sun from sun-rise to sun-set. On these occasions I also used to be with her on the terrace in the sun. And constantly hearing the *mantras* of the sun-worship repeated, they became quite familiar to me. At other times Didima (grandmother) used to hold a *Haribasar* (a day sacred to Hari or Vishnu) festival, and the whole night there was *katha* (recitation) and *kirtan* (singing), the noise of which would not let us sleep. She used to look after the whole household and do much of the work with her own hands. Owing to her skill in house-keeping all domestic concerns worked smoothly under her guidance.....She was as lovely in appearance as she was skilled in her work and steadfast in her religious faith.....I used to accompany her to our old family house to see Gopinath Tagore (the family idol.) But I did not like to leave her and go to the outer apartments. I would sit in her lap and watch everything quietly from the window.

This orthodox influence on Devendranath's childhood lasted till the early days of his college life, and he tells us how on his way to the Hindu College he used to bow down daily before the image of Kali at Thanthania and pray to the goddess for success in his daily lessons. But, as already stated, there were disintegrating influences at work around him. One of these influences was the life and work of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, which seems to have made an impression on him very early in his life. As the son of his dear friend Dwarakanath, the Raja was very fond of him and treated him very affectionately when, as a school boy, he used, in the company of a son of the Raja, a school-mate of his, to visit his garden-house at

Maniktola, tempted by the *lichis* and other fruits that grew there in abundance.

"Sometimes," says the Maharshi, "I went and played many mischievous pranks there. I used to pluck the *lichis* and pick the green-peas in the garden and eat them in great glee. One day Ram Mohun Roy said, 'Brother, why roam about in the sun? Sit down here and eat as many *lichis* as you can.' To the *mali* (gardener) he said, 'Go and get *lichis* from the trees, and bring them here.' He immediately brought a plateful of *lichis*. Then Ram Mohun Roy said, 'Eat as many *lichis* as you like.' His appearance was calm and dignified. I used to look up to him with great respect and reverence. There was a swing in the garden in which Ram Mohun Roy used to swing by way of exercise. When I went to the garden of an afternoon he used to make me sit in it and swing me himself. After a time he would sit in it himself and say, 'Brother, now it is your turn to push.'"

But the anecdote which tells of the really determining influence of the Raja's character on young Devendranath has yet to be told, and we shall tell it in his own words.

"It was the time of the Durga Puja in the month of *Aswin*. I went to invite Ram Mohun Roy to this festival and said, 'Rammani Tagore (Devendranath's grandfather) begs to invite you to see the *Puja* (worship) for three days.' Upon this he said, 'Brother, why come to me? Go and ask Radhaprasad (a son of the Raja).'"

We have italicised the word *me*. In a conversation with Babu Bipin Chandra Pal reported in a pamphlet entitled "A Symposium on Raja Ram Mohun Roy," the Maharshi said that the emphasis which the Raja put upon the word '*me*' rang in his ears all of his life, though he could not understand it on the occasion we have just mentioned. The Raja seems to have had a prophetic vision, at any rate a glimpse, of the future career of young Devendranath as his successor in leading the movement he had in-

augurated. When he was leaving for England and had come to take leave of his friends at the residence of the Tagore at Jorasanko, the great reformer would not leave till his young friend, who was then absent from the house, was sought out and brought to him. When he came the Raja very affectionately shook hands with him. The Maharshi, when he awoke to the great mission of his life, interpreted this parting shake of hands as the silent mark of a solemn ordination to the great office he subsequently held.

THE GREAT AWAKENING

The seeds thus sown in young Devendranath's early life began to bear fruit at the death of his grandmother. As Nachiketa in the *Kathopanishad*, he stood in the presence of death and took lessons on God and immortality from that grim teacher. It was at the cremation grounds on the banks of the Hugli, where, as usual with orthodox Hindus, his grandmother was taken shortly before her death, that the great awakening came to him and determined his whole future career. We shall let the Maharshi himself tell us of this great event. He says:

"On the night before Didima's death I was sitting at Nimtala ghat* on a coarse mat near the shed. It was the night of the full-moon, the moon had arisen, the burning ground was near. They were singing the holy name to Didima: 'Will such a day ever come when, uttering the name of Hari, life will leave me?' The sounds reached my ears faintly, borne on the night-wind. At this opportune moment a strange sense of the unreality of all things suddenly entered my mind. I was as if no longer the same man. A strong aversion to wealth arose within me. The coarse bamboo mat on which I sat seemed to

* A bathing and landing place at Nimala in Calcutta, near which are the cremation grounds.

be my fitting seat, carpets and costly spreadings seemed hateful; in my mind was awakened a joy unfelt before. I was then eighteen years old.....My mind could scarcely contain the unworldly joy, so simple and natural, which I experienced at the burning ghat. Language is weak in every way, how can I make others understand the joy I felt? It was a spontaneous delight to which nobody can attain by argument or logic..... With this sense of joy and renunciation I returned home at midnight. That night I could not sleep. It was this blissful state of mind that kept me awake. Throughout the night my heart was suffused with a moon-light radiance of joy."

The actual death of the lady, which took place the next day, deepened the impression already made on her grandson's deeply susceptible mind. He says, "Didima breathed her last. I drew near and saw that her hand was placed on her breast, with the fourth finger pointing upwards. Turning her finger round and round, and crying 'Haribol' (the sound 'Hari') she passed into the next world. When I saw this it seemed to me that at the time of death she pointed out to me with uplifted finger, 'That is God, and the Hereafter. As Didima had been my friend in this life, so was she the guide to the next.'"

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

But the unworldly joy that had thus unaccountably filled Devendranath's young heart soon left him and cast him into a deep gloom. He tried to recover it, but failed. He lost all delight in earthly kings and a state of utter indifference to all worldly concerns came upon him. So deep was the darkness and despair he felt that, as he says, even "the rays of the mid-day sun seemed black" to him. "The temptations of the world had ceased, but the sense of God was no nearer. Earthly and Heavenly happiness

were alike withdrawn." He compared his condition to that of Narada in the *Bhagavata* Puran. The Lord had appeared to Narada, but had vanished almost immediately. When he tried to see him again he was told that it was only to stimulate his love that God had once appeared before him. He could not see him again before he had fully purified his heart and attained to the state of *yoga*. Our modern Narada therefore earnestly began a course of purification,—purifying both the heart and the intellect. His first step was to offer to his friends all that he possessed. He hoped by this means to purge his heart of all selfishness. "Whoever will ask of me anything," he said, "that is in my power to give, that will I give to him." But nobody asked him for anything except a cousin of his who wanted a number of valuable things in his sitting room. He immediately gave away those things, but this act of renunciation failed to give him relief and dispel the darkness of his soul. He then turned to the study of Sanskrit Grammar with a view to enter into Sanskrit religious literature. He also read numerous English works on philosophy, which, though at first disappointed him deeply, ultimately helped him to acquire self-knowledge, the key to all other knowledge. "I now realised," says he, that with the knowledge of the outer world we come to know our inner self. After this, the more I thought over it the more did I recognise the sway of wisdom operating throughout the whole world." The marks of design in nature clearly revealed God to

him. The sight of the starry heaven specially filled him with the presence of the Infinite and purged his intellect of the idea of a finite corporate deity. He says, "One day, while thinking of these things, I suddenly recalled how, long ago, in my early youth, I had once realised the Infinite as manifested in the infinite heavens. Again I turned my gaze towards this infinite sky, studded with innumerable stars and planets and saw the eternal God, and felt that this glory was His. He is Infinite Wisdom. He from whom we have derived this limited knowledge of ours, and this body, its receptacle,—is Himself without form. He is without body or senses. He did not shape this universe with His hands. By His will alone did He bring it into existence. He is neither the Kali of Kalighat (in the southern suburbs of Calcutta) nor the family *Shalagram*. Thus was laid the axe at the root of idolatry." It took a long time for our young philosopher to be established in Natural Theism by his studies and meditations. But at last he made his foot-hold firm and secure. "My endeavour was to obtain God not through blind faith, but by the light of knowledge." And knowledge he did obtain at last. But even this knowledge, acquired freely and independently of any supernatural revelation, did not quite satisfy him. He was endowed with a deep historical instinct, and hankered after a confirmation of his self-acquired faith by some great teacher or scripture. This confirmation he soon got in a rather strange way. He had not

latterly a religious denomination, a Hindu Theistic Church, date from Devendranath's enrolment as its member. On joining it in 1842 he found that the Vedas were recited in a side room of the Samaj building from which Sudras were excluded. Only the discourses and the hymn-singing were open to the public. This struck him as opposed to the wishes of the founder. He also found one day that a minister of the Samaj was trying to establish from the *Vedi* that Ramchandra, King of Ayodhya, was an incarnation of God. This also struck him as inconsistent with pure Theism. Our young reformer at once had these practices stopped. The reading of the Vedas became public and the doctrine of incarnation ceased to be preached from the Samaj pulpit. Next year the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, a monthly Bengali journal for disseminating the principles of the Samaj, was founded and Babu Akshay Kumar Datta, who latterly rose to great eminence as a writer, was appointed its Editor. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, the far-famed reformer and *litterateur*, was one of its contributors. The *Patrika* had a glorious career in those days. It inaugurated an era of serious journalism, of an elegant and dignified style and of deep and learned research into ancient history and literature. Though followed and partly superseded in recent times by many ably conducted journals, it still continues to live and to some extent keep up its old tradition of earnest and healthy journalism. How-

ever, the more far-reaching reforms introduced into the Brahma Samaj by Devendranath Tagore remain yet to be noticed. As already stated, the Samaj was in those days only a weekly religious meeting where texts from the Vedas were read, discourses delivered on religious subjects, and hymns sung by appointed singers. The members of the Samaj were not bound together by any common creed or guided by any common ideal. Nor was there any common object for the accomplishment of which they worked together. The young man who had just entered the Samaj was by his very nature and temperament incapable of tolerating this state of things and immediately set about reforming it. He drew up a covenant and approached Pandit Vidyavagish with it. He proposed that he and twenty more young men, some of whom later on took important parts in improvement of the Samaj, should be made to sign this covenant and be initiated into Brahma Dharma, then and in that covenant called "the true religion inculcated in the Vedanta." Suitable arrangements were made, a day was fixed, and the twenty-one selected young men went through the ceremony of initiation amidst tears of joy shed by the old minister. The initiates bound themselves to worship God daily, to eschew idol-worship and to give pecuniary support to the Brahma Samaj. The next reform was equally important. It was the promulgation of a form of worship for use both in private life and in the weekly public service of the Samaj. It consisted of texts.

from the Upanishads on the attributes of God and his relation to man and nature, *Pancha Ratna Stotra* of the *Mahanirvana Tantra* in a somewhat altered and abbreviated form. These, with an original prayer in Bengali, and with the Bengali translation of the texts subsequently added, still form the liturgy of the Adi, or first Brahma Samaj at Jorasanko, Calcutta. Scarcely less important, but rather more on account of the far-reaching results it led to, was the establishment of the Tattvabodhini Patasala, a school for training ministers, missionaries and workers for the Brahma Samaj. It was first established in Calcutta, but was latterly removed to Bansberia in the district of Hughli, then a noted seat of learning, where a splendid building was erected for it. The chief subject of study in this Patasala was the Upanishads, but it was soon found that a proper knowledge of these writings implied a knowledge of the Vedic *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* with which they were closely connected. Four Brahmana students were therefore sent to Benares for studying the Vedas. The return of these students with their first hand knowledge of Vedic literature, a knowledge which had become practically extinct in Bengal, produced a revolution in the Brahma Samaj and indirectly in the educated life of the whole province. Of this revolution we shall speak later on. The Vedic students went to Benares in 1844-45 and returned in 1847. In the meantime two events occurred in our young hero's life both of which tried

his moral strength to the utmost and permanently raised him in the estimation of his countrymen.

TRIAL AND VICTORY

Babu Dwarakanath Tagore died in England in 1846. His youngest son Nagendranath was at his death-bed, while Devendranath, the eldest, and Girindranath, the second were here. When the news reached them, their first thought was as to the way they should perform the *sraddha* (requiem) ceremony. "They religiously performed all the rigorous penances prescribed for a son in the event of his father's death." But the actual ceremony involved idolatry and the offering of cakes in the name of the departed soul. How could Devendranath, who had, in taking the Brahmic covenant, promised to eschew idolatry, take part in such a ceremony? This question troubled him day and night. He consulted his younger brother, who also had taken the vow. He was for conforming to the established rules from fear of persecution and unpopularity. The leaders of orthodox society, including Devendranath's nearest relatives, got a scent of the coming fight and solemnly warned him, telling him plainly of the danger and infamy he was going to face. But our hero was firm. He said, "I have taken the vow of Brahmaism and cannot do anything contrary to that vow. For if I did so I should commit a sin against religion." All forsook him except an up-country Brahma preacher named Lalla Hazari Lal, one of the many preachers whom

Devendranath had sent out to preach his religion. He said, "Fear the world! You should not fear it. Fear Him alone, fearing whom one is fearless of all else. We shall cling to Brahma Dharma even at the risk of our lives." While passing his days and nights in trouble, Devendranath once dreamed a beautiful dream. A spirit-guide beckoned him and led him through clusters of stars and planets to a radiant world. In a splendid house there, in a well-furnished room, he met his departed mother. She asked him if he had really become a *Brahmajnanin* (a Theist; literally—one who has known Brahman). On being answered in the affirmative, the lady said, "*Kulam pavitram janani kṛitārtha*,"—"Your family is sanctified, your mother's desire is fulfilled."

"On seeing her," says the Maharshi in his *Autobiography*, "and hearing these sweet words of hers, my slumber gave way before a flood of joy." He must have been greatly fortified by this voice from the other world. When the ceremony came off, Girindranath took his place and performed the idolatrous portion, while he, amidst a chorus of angry discontent, gave away the gifts after uttering a theistic *mantra* selected by himself, and at the end of the ceremony recited the *Kathopanishad* in his own room in the presence of a few Brahmas. In doing this he thought he followed the injunction of the Upanishad itself given in I. 3. 17. "Friends and relatives," he says, "forsook me, but God drew me nearer to Him self."

The other trial was even more severe, and while victory in the first appeals more to the heterodox than to those who believe in the current religion of the country, our hero's triumph in this appeals to all and is perhaps one of the brightest examples of probity in the world. We shall narrate it in the words of the Maharshi's second son, Mr. Satyendranath Tagore, in his introduction to his English translation of his father's *Autobiography*. He says: "My grandfather Dwarakanath Tagore died deeply involved in debts. At the time of his death it was found that his liabilities amounted to about a crore of rupees, while his assets were only forty-three lakhs. To maintain his princely state, Dwarakanath Tagore had apparently contracted heavy debts in the name of his firm (Carr Tagore & Co.) taking care at the same time to secure a portion of his property in the shape of trust, for the benefit of his family. The manager of the firm, Mr. D. M. Gordon, convened a meeting of the creditors and informed them that the proprietors of the firm were prepared to make over to them all their property excepting only the trust property, which no one could touch. The creditors themselves, when the proposal was made, seemed inclined to accept it; but it did not commend itself to my father's sense of justice. He held a brief consultation with his brother and astonished every one by declaring that they would not avail themselves of the protection afforded by the trust, but would place everything unreservedly in the hands of their credi-

tors till all their heavy liabilities were liquidated. The creditors were deeply moved, and one of them, it is recorded, shed tears at the meeting. An arrangement was come to by which the creditors took charge of the property and allowed the bereaved sons a subsistence allowance of Rs. 25,000 per annum. My father felt supremely happy in the consciousness of having dealt justly by his creditors, and as he went home he remarked to his brother Girindra that they had performed a Visvajit Yajna by giving away everything they possessed. My father writes :

What I had desired came to pass. I wanted to renounce the world, and the world left me of its own accord. What a singular coincidence! I had prayed to my God,—I desire nothing but Thee!—and the Lord in his mercy granted my prayer. He took away everything from me and revealed himself unto me. My heart's desire was fulfilled to the letter. The creditors, however, did not long continue to hold the property. They were so convinced of my father's honest intentions that in two years they relinquished the estate to his management, and accordingly he resumed its charge. It took years and years for him to pay off the compounded debts, but by judicious management and exemplary self-denial he eventually succeeded in doing so to the last farthing. It was not only in the matter of his father's debts that he was scrupulous. Dwarakanath Tagore had been profuse in his charities, and some liberal promises of pecuniary assistance remained unfulfilled before his death. My father took upon himself the discharge of all such obligations, and in one instance, in the case of a promise of a lakh of rupees made to the District Charitable Society of Calcutta, it is said that he paid not only the full donation, but interest thereon from the date on which it had been promised.

REJECTING THE INFALLIBILITY OF THE VEDAS

The Brahma Samaj under Devendranath had up to this time been regarded both by its opponents and most of its followers as a sect of Vedantists rejecting the worship of the Vedic and the Puranic deities, as

many old Vedantists had done, and devoted to the worship and meditation of the Supreme Being, but nevertheless believing, like their old co-religionists, in the infallibility of the Vedas, specially in its later portions, the Vedantas or Upanishads. But a little incident, which occurred in 1845, led to a controversy and not a little searching of hearts, which revealed that the Brahma Samaj was by no means at one on the latter point,—the infallibility of the Vedas. As we shall see soon, the controversy led to a public renunciation of this doctrine by the Brahma Samaj. The incident referred to was the conversion by Dr. Alexander Duff, the well-known Scotch Missionary of those days in India, of a young Hindu, of respectable parentage, and his wife to Christianity. The young man had been a pupil of Dr. Duff's school. Devendranath, though himself a reformer, and heterodox in his religious views, was intensely patriotic in feeling, and was annoyed and deeply agitated by what seemed to him the encroachment of a foreign religion and foreign ways of living into the very sanctum of a Hindu family. He made common cause with the orthodox in this matter and with their help resolved to oppose the incursions of the common enemy of both orthodox Hinduism and his reformed Hinduism, the religion of the Brahma Samaj. For once the ranks of the Brahma Samaj and the Dharma Sabha,—the orthodox assembly established for opposing Brahmaisim—joined hands and established a Hindu Hitarthi Vidyalay (a school for the good of Hindus), so that Hindu boys

might not be tempted to attend Dr. Duff's school and thereby run the risk of imbibing Christian ideas. Very unlike had been Raja Ram Mohun Roy's attitude towards Christianity. Dr. Duff having sought his help in inducing Hindu boys to attend his school, the Raja had freely given his help and had said to the boys, "I don't see why by attending a Christian school or by reading the Bible, one should become a Christian. I have read the Bible, but have not become a Christian." However, Dr. Duff retaliated the Brahma Samaj's opposition to his cause and his educational efforts by attacking the Samaj and its views. One of the doctrines attacked by him was the infallibility of the Vedas. In reply to his criticism, the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* wrote:—

"We will not deny that the reviewer (Dr. Duff, who wrote in the *Calcutta Review*) is correct in remarking that we consider the Vedas and the Vedas alone, as the authorised rule of Hindu Theology. They are the sole foundation of all our beliefs and the truths of all other Shastras must be judged of according to their agreement with them. What we consider as revelation is contained in the Vedas alone; and the last part of our holy scriptures, treating of the final dispensation of Hinduism, forms what is called [the] Vedanta."

This plain and formal enunciation of Vedic authority in the organ of the Samaj led to a controversy on the subject between the members of the Samaj itself. The pro-Vedic articles in the paper are said to have been from the pen of Babu Rajnarain Bose, a great friend of Devendranath, who rose latterly to great eminence as a writer and speaker and was for many years the President of the Samaj. The editor himself, Babu Akshay Kumar Datta, was

not a believer in Vedic infallibility. He was intensely rationalistic in his views and was the leader of a rationalistic party in the Samaj, a party that advocated free thought and social reform, and whose influence now began to be felt in the affairs of the Samaj. This party contented itself by opposing the doctrine in the correspondence columns of the Samaj organ. The controversy deepened, and at last took a decisive turn when the four Brahmanas who had been sent to Benares to study the Vedas came back and gave out the results of their studies. Babu Satyendranath Tagore writes :—

“Finally, after much discussion, my father formally renounced the doctrine of verbal inspiration. At a general meeting of the Brahmas it was agreed that the Vedas, Upanishads and other ancient writings were not to be accepted as infallible guides, that Reason and Conscience were to be supreme authority, and the teachings of the Scriptures were to be accepted only in so far as they harmonized with the light within us.”

It is evident, as already stated, that the Maharshi started in his religious career with Natural Theism—founded on direct personal experience, call it Intuition, Reason or Conscience, or by any other name you please. As long as he believed that the teachings of the Upanishads tallied with his experience, he regarded himself as a Vedantist and even a believer in the authority of the Vedas. But when, on a deeper study of the Upanishads and the earlier portions of the Vedas with the help of the students who had returned from Benares, he found that they did not always agree with his own views, he ceased to believe in their infallibility and rejected them as

authorities. It is evident, then, that his theological position was throughout rationalistic, and that he had never—even when he believed the Vedas to contain nothing but truth,—thought of any external authority, any authority than his own reason or sense of truth, as binding on him, as having any right to his acceptance unless it commended itself to his reason. But this—the view just rejected and really never held by the Maharshi is the orthodox view—Hindu, Christian or otherwise—of Scriptural authority. The Scriptures are believed by the orthodox to have a coercive power over our minds, to have an intrinsic right to be believed by us whether their utterances seem to us reasonable or not. Devendranath, it seems, had never, in his life, occupied this orthodox position, or if he had ever occupied it in his childhood, he had rejected it, through the influence of the education he had received in the Hindu College, a great centre of free rationalistic thought in his young days. The position he had been occupying till the time under notice, namely that the Vedas were infallible because they agreed with reason, was already the rationalistic position—that which gives supremacy to reason or private judgment, and was, in his case, the result of an imperfect knowledge of the contents of the Vedas. With the acquisition of a fuller knowledge of the Vedas, he gave up that position. He might have taken up another position which, though wearing the guise of orthodoxy, is equally rationalistic, namely trying to show, by accepting some ancient

method of interpretation or inventing a new one, that the Vedas, though apparently unreasonable in some portions, were not really so. But either because such a method of interpretation was unknown to him or repugnant to the natural simplicity of his character, he adopted what seemed to him the straight path, that of rejecting external authority and appealing to direct personal experience. It seems that it was the monistic utterances of the Upanishads, their teaching of the essential unity of the individual and the universal self, that repelled him most, and scarcely less their teaching on *Nirvan*, the final union of *Jiva* and Brahman. He seems to have been ignorant of the way in which interpreters like Ramanuja, Madhwa and Nimbarka harmonised such utterances with dualistic utterances in the same writings and with spiritual experiences implying the distinction of the worshipper from the worshipped. The only interpretation which he had before him seems to be that of Sankara, for he makes no mention of any other in his writings. And Sankara seemed to him most unsatisfactory, though he was obliged to utilise him largely in the annotations on the Upanishads he published. Let us hear him a little on these points. He says:—

Our relation with God is that of worshipper and worshipped—this is the very essence of Brahmaism. When we found the opposite conclusion to this arrived at in Sankaracharya's *Sariraka Mimansa* of the *Vedanta Darsana*, we could no longer place any confidence in it, nor could we accept it as a support of our religion. I had thought that if I renounced the *Vedanta Darsana* and accepted the eleven Upanishads only, I would find a support for Brahmaism—hence I had relied

entirely upon these, leaving aside all else. But when in the Upanishads I came across—'Sohamasmī' I am he; 'Tattvamasi,' Thou art that—then I became disappointed in them also. These Upanishads could not meet all our needs—could not fill our hearts. . . . Again, when I saw in the Upanishads that the worship of Brahman leads to Nirvana my soul was dismayed at the idea. *Karmani vijñānamayascha atma pare vyvyesarva ekibhavantī*. All deeds together with the sentient soul, all become one in Brahman. If this means that the sentient soul loses its separate consciousness then this is not the sign of salvation—but of terrible extinction. The eternal progress of the soul according to the Brahma Dharma on the one hand, and this salvation by annihilation on the other—what a vast difference! This Nirvana Salvation of the Upanishads did not find a place in my heart."

It may be noticed here that the Maharshi's repugnance to these Vedantic doctrines, though shared in for a long time by his followers, including Kesav Chandra Sen, was greatly modified in the last days of the latter, and later on in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, the third and latest section of the Brahma Samaj; and that both Kesav and the leaders of the Samaj just mentioned saw a meaning in the teachings of the Vedanta referred to which the Maharshi had not seen, and even reconciled them with their Brahmanism

FOUNDATION OF BRAHMANISM

The rejection of Vedic authority made our reformer anxious about the basis of his religion and the principles of unity among the members of the Brahma Samaj. In knowing God in his early life through meditations on the infinitude of space and on design in nature, he had already vaguely felt what the natural foundation of religion is. He now promulgated a more or less definite theory of the intuitive

knowledge of God and declared that to be the basis of Brahmaism. This theory was latterly developed in several series of lectures and in association with Kesav Chandra Sen shortly after the latter joined the Brahma Samaj. Of this foundation of Brahmaism the Maharshi says in his *Autobiography* :

Where was the foundation to be laid? I came to see that the pure heart, filled with the light of intuitive knowledge,—this was its basis. Brahman reigned in the pure heart alone. The pure unsophisticated heart was the seat of Brahmaism. We could accept those texts only of the Upanishads which accorded with that heart. Those sayings which disagreed with the heart we could not accept. These were the relations which were now established between ourselves and the Upanishads, the highest of all *Shastras*."

But the Maharshi proceeded further. As his heart, even after it had found God by direct knowledge, had hankered after confirmation from some high authority, so he thought that his fellow-believers also were in need of some such confirmation. So he published something like a hand-book of Brahma doctrine and practice consisting of texts from the *Upanishads*, the *Smritis*, or law-books, the *Mahabharat*, the *Mahanirvan Tantra*, etc., with his comments and translation into Bengali. The first part, consisting exclusively of texts from the Upanishads, treats of the attributes of God and his relation to us. It is called by him the *Brahmin Upanishad*, and he believes that he compiled it under divine inspiration. This compilation is entitled *Brahma Dharma* and was once held in high estimation by all Brahmas. Its popularity has, since the schism led by Kesav Chandra Sen, greatly decreased, partly perhaps because ethnic

Scriptures other than the Hindu have since become available for study and reference, and partly because the whole mine from which, in the words used by the venerable compiler himself, the gold has been extracted, has been opened up, and instead of reading the texts in the isolated and in many cases altered and mutilated form in which they stand in the book, real lovers of the *Shastras* like to read them in their original form and context. However, the service done by the compilation for many years after its publication, when nothing similar to it existed, was truly incalculable. One other service done by the Maharshi towards the consolidation of his Samaj was the revision of the Vedantic covenant mentioned before in the light of the position now taken by him and his followers, and the adoption of a short creed by all members of the Samaj. Of this creed the following is an English translation (given by Mr. Satyendranath Tagore):—

1. In the beginning there was naught. The One Supreme alone existed. He created the whole universe.

2. He alone is the God of Truth, Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Power, Eternal and All-pervading, the One without a second. (*Ekamevadvitīyam.*)

3. In His worship lies our salvation in this world and in the next.

4. Loving Him and doing that which He loveth constitutes His worship.

LIFE IN THE HIMALAYAS & RETURN THEREFROM

The Maharshi was a great traveller. In addition to his love for travel, which led him to various places in the country and to Ceylon, China and Burma, the necessity he felt, since embracing Brahmaism, of keeping himself aloof from the idolatrous ceremonies which, according to the feelings of other members of his family, continued to be held in his house, made him leave Calcutta every year about the time of the Durga Puja festival and set out on a tour. The most important tour thus undertaken was the one of 1856, when he for the first time set foot on the Himalayas. Of his life in the mountains Babu Satyendranath says:—

He spent a year and a half among the mountains in the vicinity of the Simla Hills, absorbed in intense study and contemplation, and returned to Calcutta shortly after the Sepoy Mutiny, a regenerated soul, full of ardour and enthusiasm to propagate the holy religion he had embraced." Again: "There he heard the call which was to definitely determine his future career.

Of this call the Maharshi himself writes in his *Autobiography*:—

One day in the month of Aswin I went down the *khud*, and standing on the bridge of a river, was filled with wonder to see the indomitable strength and playful whirls of its current. Oh! how pure and white is the river here! How naturally clear and cool its waters! Why then does it dash downwards in order to deprive itself of this purity? The lower it goes the more will it become defiled and tainted by the dirt and refuse of this earth,—why then does it rush headlong in that very direction? But what power has it to keep still for its own sake? By the command of that All-ruling One, though it be stained with the dirt of the earth, still it has to humble its pride and take a downward course in order to fertilize the land and make it yield grain. I was musing thus, when suddenly I heard the solemn command of the Guide within me—"Give up.

thy pride and be lowly like this river. The truth thou hast gained, the devotion and trustfulness that thou hast learnt here,—go, make them known to the world.’

In spite of great unwillingness to leave the hills which had so charmed him, Devendranath obeyed the commandment he had received and returned to Calcutta. As already stated, “he returned a regenerated soul.” And this regeneration led to the regeneration of his church. Up to the time it had been little more than a body of free-thinkers and though it had been holding regular services, it had scarcely tasted the joys of communion with God. With Devendranath’s return from the hills there dawned in it a new era of fervent prayer and zealous and earnest life. “It was then,” says Mr. S. N. Tagore, “that he poured forth his inspired utterances in a series of sermons, delivered extempore from the pulpit, which made a most profound impression upon the congregation. The sermons were taken down in writing by myself and others, and eventually published in a book entitled the ‘Brahma Dharma Vyakhyan’ or ‘Exposition of the Brahma Dharma.’” Of the effect of these sermons, and of Mr. Satyendranath Tagore’s hymns, which were called forth by them and deepened their effect, Pandit Sivanath Sastri says in his *History of the Brahma Samaj* :—

Hundreds began to flock to the services of the Samaj to listen to the fervid and inspired utterances of the old leader, every word of which made them feel that God was near. The lives of many were changed. Many who had gone far in the path of sin repented and gave up their old ways. Those who were present at these services can never forget the deep ferment that those utterances caused in their hearts. The number of candidates for initiation into the new faith increased

every week. It was noised about that the Brahma Samaj was developing a new life. Its annual meetings began to attract unusually large crowds. Its new hymns, mostly composed by Satyendranath Tagore, the second son of Devendranath, became a subject of talk of the whole town; the new inspiration that was in them was something very charming. Men were unfamiliar with such expressions of rapturous joy and devout hope in connection with things which they were in the habit of regarding as unseen and intangible.

UNION WITH AND SEPARATION FROM KESAV

CHANDRA SEN

Those who made most of the atmosphere of religious activity created in the Brahma Samaj after the Maharshi's return from the Himalyas, were a number of earnest and energetic young men who had recently joined the Samaj. The most talented of these young men, in fact, the leading spirit among them, was Kesav Chandra Sen, belonging to a very respectable Vaidya (physician) family of Calcutta, and grandson of Babu Ramkamal Sen, the friend and co-adjutor of Dr. H. H. Wilson. He joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857 when he was only nineteen years old. His earnestness and ability soon won the affection and admiration of the old leader and he accepted the young man as a friend and co-adjutor. A deep and abiding attachment, such as is rarely seen, sprang up between them. In 1859 a theological institution under the name of the "Brahma School" was jointly established by them. In this school, which soon had a branch at the neighbouring town of Bhowanipur, Devendranath lectured in Bengali and Kesav in English. It proved a powerful instrument in disseminating Brahma doctrines and giving a

definite shape to them as well as in infusing zeal and earnestness for the cultivation of practical piety. The friendship and co-operation thus began lasted for a few years and became a source of new strength to the Samaj. But it became apparent ere long that in spite of their mutual love and their common earnestness and enthusiasm for the service of their church and country, the characters of Devendra and Kesav were composed of elements which were rather incompatible and which could not long work together. Though both were educated under the same system, in fact in the same college, their sympathies and temperaments were very different. Devendra had great love and respect for the ancient civilization and literature of India, and his religious life was awakened, fostered and formed, as we have seen, by a devout study of the Upanishads. On the other hand Kesav was an ardent lover and admirer of Christ and Christianity and owed much of what he valued most in his life to the study of the Bible. The former, though he had broken with idolatry, and though ready to sacrifice all for the sake of conscience, was nevertheless conservative in his views on social reform and slow in giving offence to the orthodox. His ideal was to keep Hindu society intact and to introduce reforms into it slowly and cautiously, while Kesav was an ardent reformer and a cosmopolitan in his social views, cherishing little respect for old customs, and advocated a thorough reconstruction of Hindu society on a reformed basis. How could two men so differ-

ent in their composition work together for a long time? And yet so deep was their love and respect for each other, that the old leader was, for some time, carried away through the influence of his young disciple much further than might be expected from him, and the latter, while he even saw that co-operation was becoming impossible, waited long, against his own inclinations, and against the promptings of his more restless comrades, to see if a rupture could be avoided. As the latter was backed by a number of ardent young men, so was the former more or less influenced by a body of elderly people of extremely cautious and conservative instincts whose Brahmaism consisted only in attending the public worship of the Samaj and perhaps adopting a theistic form of worship in their private lives, and who were opposed to all schemes of domestic and social reform. The Maharshi was much ahead of this extremely conservative party. He had not only, as we have seen, performed his father's *sraddha* according to a form approved by his conscience, but had also adopted a reformed ritual, retaining much of the old, but expurgating it of all vestiges of idolatry and *deva*-worship, on the occasion of the marriage of his second daughter. Thenceforth a comprehensive reformed ritual has been regulating the domestic ceremonies of his family. But he went even further than this. When the younger party in the Samaj represented that a Brahma should not wear the sacrificial thread, for it was a badge of caste and *deva*-worship, and when

they published a book setting forth the Brahma ideal of life, in which the discarding of the thread was taught as a duty incumbent on a Brahma of the first three castes, the Maharshi threw away his thread and discontinued giving threads to the other members of his family. But the younger party was not satisfied even by this. As their ideal of Brahma life involved the discarding of the sacrificial thread and abstinence from taking part in idolatrous ceremonies, they became impatient of the performance of the ministerial functions of the Brahma Samaj by men who retained their threads and who conformed to idolatrous rituals in their domestic ceremonies. They now began to demand that the ministers of the latter class should be dismissed and only those retained as ministers who were thorough-going non-conformists and reformers. Fearing a schism—a secession of the younger party—Devendranath yielded to their demand and dismissed the old thread-bearing ministers. In addition to Kesav Chandra Sen, who had been appointed minister in 1862, two threadless Brahmanas, Bijay Krishna Gosvami and Ananda Prasad Chattarji, were newly appointed as ministers. “This step,” as Pandit Sivanath Sastri says, “served as the last straw that broke the camel’s back.” Already the appointment of a non-Brahmana in the person of Kesav Chandra Sen as a minister, and specially his Christian proclivities and ardour for reform, culminating in the promotion of two inter-caste marriages in the Samaj, had given dire offence to the old party.

And now actual injury was added to offence. They therefore made earnest representations to Devendranath to reconsider his position and cancel the arrangement he had made. He soon made up his mind in favour of the old party and resolved to recede from the position to which his young friends had, as it were, dragged him against his own inclinations. But though deciding against the younger party, his love and regard for them was so great that, in restoring the old order of things he acted in a rather awkward manner. It happened in the following way. The great cyclone of 1864 had damaged the Samaj building and the services of the Samaj were temporarily removed to Devendranath's own house.

"While there," says Babu Pratap Chandra Mazumdar in his *Life and Teachings of Kesav Chandra Sen*, "one Wednesday (the day for the weekly services in the Maharshi's Samaj) in November, it was so arranged that before the newly elected *upacharyas* (assistant ministers, who had renounced their Brahmanical threads) arrived, the two former *upacharyas*, who had been deposed for retaining their sacred threads by the authority of Devendranath himself, were installed into the pulpit again. In order that this might be done without hindrance, the devotional proceedings were begun a few minutes earlier than the appointed time. When on arrival at the place of worship Kesav and his friends witnessed this irregularity, they left the service and warmly protested. Devendranath replied that as the service was being held in his private house he had the right to make what arrangement he liked. But Kesav's party insisted that it was the public worship of the Brahma Samaj only transferred for a little interval to his house by the consent of the congregation; now, if he chose to violate rules laid down under his own presidency, they must decline to join such services in future. Thus began this act of secession from the parent Samaj at Jorasanko."

The bold and uncompromising attitude assumed by the younger party removed the feeling of delicacy with which Devendranath had at first acted, and he

proceeded to deprive them of all the power they had in the Samaj by virtue of their offices. As the sole trustee of the Samaj he resumed the charge of all affairs in his own hands. Kesav Chandra Sen and Pratap Chandra Mazumdar were dismissed from their posts as Secretary and Assistant Secretary and Babu Dvijendranath, Devendranath's eldest son, and one of the re-installed ministers were appointed in their places. The old council, which had in it some members of the younger party, was replaced by a new one consisting exclusively of men of the old party. The *Tattvabodhini Pattrika* was taken away from the hands of the former, who then started a new journal named the *Dharmatattva*. The *Indian Mirror*, which had been started with Devendranath's pecuniary help, henceforth became Kesav's paper after a struggle for its possession. Kesav's party resented and protested against what they considered high-handed and unconstitutional proceedings on the part of the old leader, and tried hard to introduce something like a constitution into the Samaj but their efforts failed. At last they approached Devendranath with a representation in which the following points were chiefly urged :—(1) Neither the Minister nor the Assistant Minister nor the Reader (*Adyeta*) of the Brahma Samaj should hold any badge of caste or sectarian distinctions. (2) If you do not consent to adopt the system described above with regard to divine worship, you will oblige us by allowing the Brahma public to hold their service in the Brahma

"Samaj premises on a separate day." Devendranath, in his reply, expressed his inability to comply with either of these requests. As to granting the younger party a separate day for prayer in their own way, he thought the step would lead to even greater ill-feeling than had already arisen. As regards depriving the older party of Brahmas from privileges they had so long enjoyed, he said :

"Before the promulgation of the Code of Brahma Ceremonials the worship of the one true God was in vogue, and those who at that time joined the Brahma Samaj with zeal and reverence had to prepare themselves like practical Brahmas of the present time for extreme persecution, which many of them did actually suffer. Even you yourselves at first joined the Brahma Samaj for the sole purpose of the worship of God, and to this day perhaps there are among you men who cannot join you in any matter except prayer. But notwithstanding that many among the elder and younger Brahmas have not been able to come forward to practise, neither they nor you are objects of my disfavour. If, actuated by the consideration that unless your wishes are complied with, you may separate yourselves, I manifest any indifference towards them, I shall be guilty of partiality. When they, who have defended the Brahma Samaj so long according to their own idea, preserve that idea even now, how can I deprive them of their former privileges? (Extracted from the *Indian Mirror* in Pandit S. N. Sastri's *History of the Brahma Samaj*.)

"This correspondence," as Pandit Sivanath Sastri says, "to all intents and purposes closed the controversy between the two parties, and the real schism may be regarded to have taken place from this time." But a separate Samaj, the "Brahma Samaj of India" was established somewhat later. It was founded on the 11th November, 1866, with Kesav Chandra Sen as Secretary. The two parties divided, for division had become inevitable; but it was a division of ideals and principles, not of hearts.

The old leader retained his affection for his go-ahead disciples, and the latter their reverent and grateful feelings towards him. In a year after their formal secession, they approached him with an address recounting his invaluable services to the Brahma cause and his personal affection and kindness to many of the party. It was in this address that the old leader was first called "Maharshi" which henceforth became his universally recognised title. Devendranath gave a suitable reply, which concluded with the following words:

If I find you more successful in this work than I have been, if I find you have successfully carried out my idea to the extent I desire, the joy I shall then feel will be beyond comparison with what this address affords to-day. The Brahma Samaj of India now rises from one corner of the country; in future its work will be commensurable with its hope; perhaps that which has been accomplished up to this time will be accomplished by it.

The Maharshi's dignified behaviour in the party struggle just narrated is perhaps without a parallel in history. "He never replied to a single charge, never made a single retort and never gave any personal explanation," says the historian of the Brahma Samaj. His *Autobiography* stops just when Kesav Chandra Sen joined the Brahma Samaj, and neither his differences with his young disciples nor anything he did thereafter are recorded in it. When asked about the reason of this important omission, he would say, "If I had differences with my son, Satyendra, would I care to give my defence in the matter?" Really, the Maharshi is more eloquent in his silence than he should have been if he spoke.

After the schism the Maharshi practically retired from active life, leaving his Samaj, henceforward called the Adi (or first) Brahma Samaj, to the management of his sons and friends. The only acts in his life, after this event, worthy of record, are the following:—(1) He re-introduced investiture with the thread into the *upanayan* ceremony in his ritual,—a step against which the party of Kesav vehemently protested, and which they looked upon as a recession. The Maharshi himself, however, did not resume his thread, as he looked upon himself as a *sanyasi* (one who had renounced the word). (2) At Kesav's request and as part of a proposed scheme of co-operation between the leaders, he once, in 1871, occupied the pulpit of the Brahma Samaj of India, but unfortunately, though praising Kesav heartily for his noble doings in the cause of Brahmaism, spoke rather strongly against his pro-Christian tendencies, which really widened instead of bridging the gulf between the two parties. (3) The Maharshi and his Samaj opposed the passing of the Brahma (rather 'Civil' in its final form) Marriage Bill of 1872 on the ground that the Adi Brahma Samaj form of marriage was really a Hindu form and that the passing of a distinct Act for Brahmas would alienate them from the main body of Hindus. (4) When the Sadharan Brahma Samaj was established in 1878, he gave it his strong support and occupied its pulpit on two occasions. Several of its leading members were

on terms of close friendship with him. In 1887 a large number of the members of the Samaj approached him with an address, in reply to which he uttered his *Upahar*, one of his few published utterances. A few years before his death he dedicated his beautiful hermitage at Bolpur, where he had spent many years in meditation, to the public for purposes of Theistic worship and meditation. A model school for boys has since been established near it by his worthy son Rabindranath.

The Maharshi passed away at his paternal residence in January, 1905, at the advanced age of eighty-eight. His body was followed to the cremation grounds by hundreds of loving disciples belonging to all sections of the Brahma Samaj and by large numbers of his countrymen belonging to all classes of society. We shall close this brief narrative of his life by a quotation from Pandit Sivanath Sastri which refers to a trait of the Maharshi's character which has received no notice in our account, we mean his love of knowledge. Pandit Sastri says:—

Though enamoured of the sayings of the ancient Rishis of India, and valuing above all the treasures of early Sanskrit literature, his love for general culture was very great. He had studied carefully the works of such western philosophers as Kant, Fichte, Cousin, Spinoza, Descartes, Reid, Sir William Hamilton, Dugald Stewart and others amongst the well-known writers of the last century, and J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, &c., amongst the forerunners of the new age. In fact his reading was vast and various. He would never let any new discovery in science or any newly propounded theory of life and society pass away without trying to make himself acquainted with its main features. Of religious teachers, both of the East and the West, he was a devout student.

Kesav Chandra Sen

KESAV CHANDRA SEN is honoured by the Brahmos as the third great leader of their movement—as one who transformed the Hindu Theism of the first two leaders, Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, into a universal and cosmopolitan religion and inaugurated a series of far-reaching social reforms. He is recognised and respected by the general Indian public as a great orator and religious reformer.

FAMILY AND PARENTAGE

Kesav Chandra Sen belonged to the Vaidya caste. It is one of the two highest non-Brahmana castes of Bengal, the other being the Kayastha. Kshatriyas and Vaisyas being very rare in the province, the Vaidyas and Kayasthas rank next to the Brahmanas. Each of them claims to be superior to the other. Whatever the origin and history of the Vaidyas may be, there is, however, no doubt about the high rank they occupy in Bengal as to their literacy and public spirit and the number of authors, scholars and even saints and religious teachers produced by them. Kesav's family, the Sens of Colutola in Calcutta, though not very rich, are a highly respectable one in the city. Their ancestral home is at Garifa, Gauriffa or Gaurpay, also called Gauripur, a

village on the banks of the Hughli, about twenty-four miles from Calcutta. But Kesav was born and bred up in Calcutta. Of the immediate ancestors of Kesav, the most illustrious was his grandfather, Ramkamal Sen. From extreme poverty he raised his family to great opulence—an income, we are told, of Rs. 2,000 a month. From being a mere type-setter in a press he rose to be the Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the Treasurer of the Calcutta Mint and the Dewan of the Bank of Bengal. His literary attainments were of a high order. He compiled a Bengali Dictionary which was pronounced to be “the fullest and most valuable work of its kind” in those days “and the most lasting monument of Ramkamal Sen’s industry, zeal and erudition.” When his grandfather died, “Kesav was,” says Mr. Pratapchandra Mazumdar, his biographer, “a little over five years old, but Ramkamal Sen had frequent occasions to watch and observe the potentialities of his tiny descendant. We have repeatedly heard members of the Sen family declare that the old wise patriarch forecast the future of his infant grandson, and said, ‘Baso (the pet name by which Kesav was called in those days) would alone be able to sustain the family reputation.’” Kesav’s father, Pyarimohan Sen, was the second son of Ramkamal Sen. He died at the early age of thirty-four, only four years after the death of his illustrious father. “All accounts,” says Mr. P. C. Mazumdar, “agree that he was a most handsome, amiable and kind-

hearted youngman. The rich and the poor, but specially the poor, loved him with the utmost warmth of cordiality." Pandit Sivanath Sastri, the historian of the Brahma Samaj, says of him :

Pyarimohan Sen, the father of Kesav Chandra Sen, though not known to fame like his father Ramkamal Sen (the friend and fellow-labourer of Dr. H. H. Wilson in Bengal) is reputed to have been a devout follower of his ancestral faith. Those who saw him in life still remember him as a man of uncommon comeliness of person, mildness of manners, exceptional purity of life, detached and unworldly in his disposition, his nose and forehead bearing the well-known marks of Vaishnava devotion.

Kesav was only ten years of age when his father died ; the latter's part, therefore, in the moulding of his character, must have been inconsiderable. It was his mother, a woman of singular piety and sweetness of manners, who was most instrumental in his education and the development of his character. Mr. Mazumdar says : " His mother is an uncommon woman and there is no doubt that much of the maternal excellence was transmitted to the character of the son." Kesav himself is said to have borne testimony to the truth of this statement at the time of her death. He said to her, " Where can there be another mother like you ? Your virtues God has given me. All that I call my own is yours." Kesav was the second of his father's three sons. Both the other two shared his piety ; but while the eldest, Navin Chandra, only admired and respected his illustrious brother, the youngest, Krishnavihari, became a devoted disciple of his and rose to eminence as a scholar and writer. He was long a co-editor, with his well-known cousin, Narendranath Sen, of the

Indian Mirror, and the Principal of the Albert College founded by Kesav but now closed.

EARLY YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Kesav was born on the 19th November, 1838. He received his earliest education at the hands of a pedagogue of the old order, a *Guru Mahasay*, as he is called in Bengal, but he was soon transferred to "the aristocratic and really good school of those days, the Hindu College." As a school-boy, Kesav was diligent in his studies and singularly pure in character. "The moral condition of Bengali boys," says Mr. Mazumdar, "was simply frightful in those days, and Kesav was looked upon as a saint in their midst." "As a boy," says his biographer in summing up the traits of his character, "he was the pride of his mother's heart, the delight of his family, the ornament of his school, the glory of his village, and the natural leader of his companions." His boyhood gave ample promise of what he was to be afterwards." One of these traits of his boyish character, which developed in his manhood and greatly affected his career for good or for evil, is thus described: "He seldom, if ever, joined in an old game, or one that was started by any other boy and not by himself, but as we all played, he watched us from a distance. If he ever consented to play with us, he would generally devise a new or unfamiliar game, and reserve the chief part for himself." An unfortunate incident prevented Kesav from completing his college education. He gave up his regular college course and without trying

to pass the senior examination, corresponding to the Intermediate Arts course of these days, he became an extra student, devoting himself mainly to the study of Philosophy. These studies, continued even after the cessation of his college life, helped him immensely in his career as a lecturer and religious teacher.

YOUTHFUL ACTIVITY

It is difficult to say to what human source Kesav owed his early religious inspiration and initiation into personal religion. But it seems that this source was his Christian studies and his contact with some Christian missionaries. His biographer says,

He read certain Christian sermons, notably those of Blair and Chalmers. He privately wrote morning and evening prayers, which he read by himself on the terrace of the house. He composed short exhortations and words of warning for passers-by, which he caused to be stuck on the house-walls in the neighbourhood."

Elsewhere he says :

He did not see many Christian teachers at the time, but the two or three he was intimate with were representative men. One of them was the Rev. T. H. Burns, Domestic Chaplain to Bishop Cotton, a devout, excellent young man, who read the New Testament to us from the Greek, translating the text into English as he proceeded with the reading. Another was the Rev. J. Long, the veteran missionary of the Church Missionary Society and a distinguished Bengali scholar, whose interest in the youth of Calcutta at the time was most sincere. The third was no other than our old friend, the Rev. C. H. A. Dall, of the American Unitarian Mission. How much spiritual benefit Kesav derived from the acquaintance of these men it is impossible to say. No doubt they were helpful to his progress, but the Christian influence they exercised in the formation of his character was, *outwardly speaking, very intangible.*

[The italics are ours.] The influence seems to have been much greater than the writer seems inclined to admit. The whole of Kesav's subsequent career

bore testimony to this. '*Outwardly*' indeed, so far as the profession of dogmatic Christian doctrines and the adoption of Christian modes of life were concerned, the influence was 'very intangible.' But the internal influence, leading to the formation of what were really Christian ideals of moral and spiritual character, and even Christian methods of religious teaching and preaching, seems to have been very great. However, with the aid of these Christian missionaries, and with some of his other friends, Kesav established about this time, we are told, a literary society called the British India Society, "with the somewhat pompous object of 'the culture of literature and sciences.'" Here religious subjects were sometimes discussed and there were passages at arms occasionally between the churchman and the unitarian. Another of Kesav's early activities was the Colutola Evening School, in which "Youngmen from contiguous neighbourhoods were gathered together and were instructed in the general branches of knowledge." A third organisation, "perhaps the most useful and successful of all his juvenile organisations," was the "Goodwill Fraternity." It was a purely religious institution, the object of which was both theological and devotional, and it was this which prepared Kesav for the Brahma Samaj ministry which he was soon to enter. Here he often preached extempore in English with great enthusiasm, pouring forth "a torrent of words and feelings, becoming often hoarse and exhausted at the end

of his discourse." Though he had not yet entered the Brahma Samaj, Kesav was already, at this time, in touch with the members of the Samaj. Mr. Satyendranath Tagore, the second son of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, the then leader of the Samaj, was Kesav's college fellow in those days, and at his request, the young Tagore brought his venerable father one day to preside over a meeting of the Fraternity. "He came," says Mr. Mazumdar, "attended by liveried servants and surrounded by massive stalwart Brahmas, who wore long gold chains and impenetrable countenances. We, who were very young men, and not initiated in the Brahma Samaj secrets at all, were highly elated and encouraged by such company, and it was an inducement to us to follow with zeal our religious career."

IN THE BRAHMA SAMAJ

Kesav joined the Brahma Samaj in 1857. In one of his lectures in England he told his audience what led him to join the Samaj. "When I felt," he says, "that I wanted a church, I found that the existing sects and churches would not answer my purpose. A small publication of the Calcutta Brahma Samaj fell into my hands, and as I read the chapter on "What is Brahmaism?" I found that it corresponded exactly with the inner conviction of my heart, the voice of God in the soul. I always felt that every outward book must be subordinated to the teachings of the Inner Spirit,—that where God speaks through the spirit in man, all earthly teachers.

must be silent and every man must bow down and accept in reverence what God thus revealed in the soul. I at once determined that I would join the Brahma Samaj or Indian Theistic Church."

▲ The first trial encountered by Kesav after his conversion to Brahmaism was that in connection with his proposed initiation by the family *guru* or spiritual guide. Preparations were made for the ceremony and the other youngmen of the family duly went through the rite. But Kesav firmly refused, in the midst of angry elders and other relatives, to accept initiation at the hands of a man whom he did not regard as his spiritual guide. His real *guru*, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, had been watching his struggle, and gladly learnt of his successfully passing through the ordeal. "The congratulations which Kesav met from him were," says Mr. Mazumdar, "the first instalment of the unexampled friendship which silently grew up between the two men afterwards." Henceforth conscience was to be Kesav's only guide, even if its voice were to lead to a severance of the friendship which thus began between him and the venerable patriarch of the Brahma Samaj.

Though Kesav had joined the Brahma Samaj, he had not yet resolved to devote himself to the propagation of Brahmaism. He served as a clerk for a time at the Bank of Bengal, and latterly at the Calcutta mint and had great prospects of promotion to high and lucrative posts. But he gave up these prospects at the call of duty amidst the remonstrances

of guardians and relatives who pointed out the magnitude of the sacrifice he was making. He was already working in a higher sphere of work, as a lecturer and writer on religious subjects ; but he felt that he must give his time and energy entirely to that work and henceforth devoted himself to it with undivided attention. He had only his small patrimony to depend upon, and that too, as we shall see by and by, came to him after a great struggle.

THE BRAHMA SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY

The first important work in connection with the Brahma Samaj to which Kesav devoted himself was that of lecturing in the Brahma School—a theological institution—which was founded in 1859. In this institution Kesav lectured in English and Devendra-nath Tagore in Bengali on the philosophical basis and fundamental principles of Brahmaism. It was not only the training ground for the future missionaries of the Brahma Samaj, but a centre of attraction for youngmen in general. It gave definiteness to the views of those who had been drawn to the Samaj and also inspired them with zeal and high ideals of conduct. Many of those who afterwards became prominent in the Samaj for their high characters and zealous activity in its cause owed their inspiration and equipment to the institution. The views—doctrinal and practical—taught and expounded there continued to be the basis of Brahma thought and activity for a long time to come. These views were set forth by Kesav in a series of fourteen tracts issued

one after another in those days. They now form Part II of his collected *Essays : Theological and Ethical*. The philosophy taught in these writings of Kesav is not of a profound nature.* They show some acquaintance with the current philosophy of Great Britain and France in those days, specially that of the Intuitionist School, but nothing like a clear grasp of the general trend of either eastern or western thought on metaphysical subjects. In fact Kesav was not a philosopher, and did not seek to be one, in any part of his life. He was pre-eminently a man of faith, a devotee, and aspired after an emotional communion with God. What he searched after in the studies which now occupied him was a rational basis of faith, and this he thought he had found in Intuition or Common Sense, a real or supposed power, innate in the human mind, of knowing the Infinite Being and in fact all essential truths, religious and ethical, without going through any process of reasoning. He thought he had found a support of this view in many philosophers, specially in those of the Scotch School of Philosophy, and in Victor Cousin, whose writings were then very popular. Of Sir William Hamilton, who at that time enjoyed a wide reputation in England and Scotland, he speaks of as "that unrivalled thinker." He seems to have been enamoured of that philosopher's theory of direct perception and thought that a religious use might be made of it but to

* "Perhaps Kesav's metaphysics at the time were not of the maturest kind."—Mr. P. C. Mazumdar.

have overlooked his Agnosticism, which appeared in its fully developed form in his eminent followers, Dean Mansel and Herbert Spencer. Of Hindu Philosophy Kesav knew nothing in those days. At any rate we find him silent about it in his writings and addresses till the very last days of his life.

THE SANGAT

As the Brahma School served to define and confirm the doctrinal views of Kesav's future followers, so a very different institution founded by him about this time helped his friends and adherents to reduce their theories to practice and develop and to expand the programme of spiritual, domestic and social reform with which they had started in their career. It was a society for spiritual culture which met in the evening once a week in Kesav's own room in his family house. The proceedings consisted mainly of conversation on spiritual matters. It was of so absorbing a nature that sometimes whole nights were spent without the members knowing how the hours had passed away. "The oldest Brahma missionaries," says Mr. Mazumdar, "trace the change of their characters, the formation of their ideals, the dawning of their aspirations, the formation of the objects of their lives, to the Sangat Sabha." The society was so named by Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, to whom the members applied for christening it, after similar bodies of Sikh aspirants in the Punjab. As to the effects of the society on the great missionary acti-

vity, which was soon to commence, to the Brahma Samaj, Mr. Mazumdar further says:

When Kesav signalized his career by the renunciation of his worldly prospects and resigned his post in the Bank of Bengal, the Sangat Sabha received him with open arms of sympathy and admiration. In it he found the comfort, the reward, and the response of his first self-denial. The sacrificial fire lighted by his example burnt a kindred flame in the young hearts which surrounded him. One act of true renunciation provokes a hundred others. The men of the Sangat soon began to take counsel who should follow Kesav's footsteps and devote himself to the service of the church. One after another began to take leave of secular life, till the Brahma Samaj came to possess a powerful body of apostolic workers, all in the prime vigour of life, concentrated with their families to self-sacrifice, determined to spread the spirit and principles of Hindu theism by ceaseless labours throughout the land.

CONTROVERSY WITH CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES

The first missionary expedition undertaken by Kesav was started in 1860, when he, with some members of the Tagore family, proceeded to Krishnagar ostensibly on a pleasure trip. Krishnagar is a noted town in Bengal, named after a Hindu prince, Krishnachandra by name, who in the eighteenth century maintained a learned court and extensively patronised learning. It was on the one hand a stronghold of Hindu orthodoxy and on the other a centre of Christian missionary activity. When Kesav began his lectures there, the Rev. Mr. Dyson, the presiding Trinitarian missionary of the town, found it necessary to deliver counter-lectures. The orthodox Hindu community sided with the Brahma lecturer and awarded to him the palm of victory. "All Krishnagar," says Mr. Mazumdar, "sided with the Brahmo reformer. The orthodox pandits formally thanked

him for vanquishing the Christian missionary, who was regarded as the common foe of all Hindus. Kesav came out with flying colours." Dr. Dyson embodied the substance of his lectures in his treatise on *Brahmic Intuitions* and Kesav sent his reply to the Christian missionary's strictures on Brahmaism in the tracts already referred to. Another controversy with a Christian opponent may be mentioned here, though it took place about three years hence. It was that with the Rev. Lal Behari Dey, then a Christian pastor and editor of a weekly named the *Indian Reformer*. In reply to his frequent criticism and ridicule of Brahmas and Brahmaism, Kesav delivered his well-known lecture on "The Brahma Samaj Vindicated." Dr. Alexander Duff, who was present at the lecture and was deeply impressed with the bulk and behaviour of the crowds of listeners, said with his characteristic frankness that "the Brahma Samaj was a power in the realm."

"Successive lectures and counter-lectures," says Mr. Mazumdar, "followed, and the Brahma Samaj, at each stage of the controversy, gained in influence, making headway and acquiring popularity with the rising generation. The orthodox Hindus in general felt thankful that an effective check had at last been given to the progress of Christian conversion on the part of the youthful, and for that reason gradually softened their attitude of hostility to the Brahma Samaj movement."

ORDINATION AS MINISTER

Maharshi Devendranath Tagore's love for Kesav has already been briefly referred to. This love increased by leaps and bounds as Kesav's powers developed. The friendship between the two men was unique and may be regarded as one of the most

remarkable friendships ever recorded in history. To quote only a few of Mr. Mazumdar's glowing sentences on the subject :

In Devendranath's prophetic eye Kesav centred in himself the whole hope and promise of the future Brahma Samaj, the ideal spirituality of the rising generation, the gifts and blessings of Providence to the land..... This excessive regard annoyed many, and was looked upon as a sort of idolatry. Till past midnight the two often sat together, the mature man of fifty and the young enthusiast of twenty-five, and outwatched the whole company of attendant Brahmas. They sat together face to face, absorbed in the ecstasy of transcendent spiritual intercourse, drunk with mutual sympathy and communion.

No wonder therefore that the Maharshi caused it to be advertised that on the first day of the first month of the Bengali year, 1784, corresponding to the 13th April, 1862, Kesav would be formally and publicly installed as Acharya (Minister) of the Brahma Samaj. "Such an installation had never been held before and such a dignity never was conferred." Those who had been hitherto preaching from the Samaj *vedi* were called only *Upacharyas* (assistant ministers) while the Maharshi was the President of the Samaj. He was afterwards called the *Pradhan* (chief) *Acharya*. The ordination was to take place at the Maharshi's family residence and great preparations were set on foot.

The great courtyard was festooned with garlands and lamps and a classical pavilion with shrubs and flowers was constructed in the middle. A long service was held, at the end of which Kesav was presented with a sort of diploma framed in gold, in which his main duties as Minister were set forth in beautiful language, the document being signed by Devendranath Tagore himself. He was also presented with a brightly emblazoned, velvet-lined casket containing an ivory seal, and the *Brahma Dharma Grantha* (a collection of Theistic texts

from the Hindu Sastras), these being, as it were, the insignia of his office. The title of Brahmananda (Rejoicer in God) was also conferred on him. Thus was Kesav formally initiated into the duties of the Minister of the Brahma Samaj, an appointment regarded by him as most sacred, and divinely given, to which he faithfully clung all his life." (Mr. P. C. Mazumdar's *Life of Kesav*.)

FRESH TRIALS

Kesav had been married, in the orthodox fashion, when he was about eighteen, to a girl who was then only nine or ten. By this time his wife had grown to be fifteen or sixteen, and he naturally wished her to witness the ceremony of his ordination just described and to share, in her own way, the honour, joy and privileges of the new career he was about to begin. He therefore formed the idea of bringing her out from the seclusion in which she had hitherto been living in his ancestral house and introducing her into the freer atmosphere of the Brahma Samaj. He wished her to accompany him to the residence of the Tagores at Jorasanko on the day of his ordination. But the proposal raised a storm of opposition from his relatives. Apart from other considerations, the fact that the Tagores belonged to a class of Brahmanas who had long since been excommunicated from the main body of orthodox Brahmanas on account of their contact with a Muhammadan named Pir Ali (after whom they were called Pir Ali Brahmanas) and were therefore deprived of social intercourse with orthodox Hindus of all castes, weighed heavily with his castemen. Days are much changed now, and the visit of an orthodox

Hindu lady to the residence of a distinguished Pirali Brahmana will give rise to no comments, not to say social difficulties, in these days. But at that time, even this slight step towards freedom and reform required a good deal of moral strength and heroism. Kesav had that strength in him, and passing through the crowd of angry relatives who had assembled in the courtyard of the house, he went out with his young wife and proceeded to the place of his ordination. He was informed in the evening of the same day by his uncle and elder brother that he must never again enter the house and must henceforth shift for himself. But his spiritual father, the Maharshi, was more than uncle and elder brother to him. He and his wife were treated with the utmost kindness in the Tagore residence and Kesav was most carefully nursed during a long period of serious illness which immediately followed his ordination. His expulsion from his ancestral house led to financial disputes with his uncle which terminated, we are told, "by his having a cheque of Rs. 20,000," and his being re-taken into the family mansion, where the *jatakarma* (birth-ceremony) of his eldest son was celebrated according to Brahma rites, and with great pomp soon after his restoration. On the last occasion, it was the relatives who banished themselves for a time from the house to avoid contamination with excommunicated heretics. But they soon came back and were slowly reconciled with Kesav and gradually influenced by his spirit of reform.

The last of Kesav's trials in this period of his life was his unpopularity as a preacher. His ordination as minister had already given deep offence to the party of cautious and conservative members of the Samaj. No non-Brahmana had hitherto been appointed to the Samaj ministry. All the previous ministers, ever since the Raja's days, had been, and all the existing ministers were, Brahmanas by caste and though there was nothing in the trust-deed excluding non-Brahmanas from the ministry, the tradition of having only Brahmana ministers had grown into a custom and seemed to be an established rule which could not be violated without offending the prejudices of a large number of adherents of the Samaj, not to speak of outsiders. The conservative party, not a few of whom were eminent men, and had great influence over the Maharshi, saw from the beginning where this forward step of the latter would lead to, and as we shall see later on, they were right in their fears. Added to all this was the contrast that was felt between the Maharshi's ministrations on the one hand and those of Kesav on the other. As Kesav's biographer says:

As a minister, he was not at home in his pulpit; he was not popular in the congregation of the Brahma Samaj of those times. His batch of youthful followers, all under twenty-five, liked whatever he said. They eagerly participated in his indefinitely enlarging faith; his great progressive convictions; zeal, with plenty of unripe energy and warmth in it. But it must be admitted that even they judged his sermons and prayers in Bengali somewhat hard and laboured, not to be compared one moment with the glowing transcendental sentences that flowed from the mouth of Devendranath Thakur, with all his inspiration of the Himalayas still ablaze within his heart.

Kesav's sermons were mostly ethical and intellectual in those days, with large outbursts of fiery enthusiasm and towering flights of faith. The elder portion of our Wednesday audiences simply tolerated the new minister with many mental protests and badly expressed compliments which were taken at their proper value.

But even the toleration spoken of seems to have been short-lived, for we read in Pandit Sivanath Sastri's *History of the Brahma Samaj*:

Many of the old members ceased to attend the services of the Samaj and took their complaints to Devendranath, who however felt sure of the wisdom of his choice and encouraged his young colleague in the discharge of his new duties.

But Kesav's opponents were silenced only for a time. Circumstances soon arose which led them to a more determined and, as it happened, more effective opposition to him.

FRESH ACTIVITIES

During the years that followed we find Kesav engaging himself in several very useful activities. With the pecuniary help of the Maharshi he founded the *Indian Mirror* as a fortnightly journal. Gradually it became a weekly and then a daily paper, the first English daily ever started by Indians. In its best days, under the editorship of Kesav, his brother Krishnavihari, and his cousin Narendranath, it did a world of good by advocating religious, social and political reform of the healthiest kind. Kesav had also a large educational project in his mind which he partly carried out by establishing a school called the Calcutta College, which was perhaps intended to be raised to a college. The school had a short life of five years only, during which it gave employment to a good

number of his friends and adherents, those who latterly helped him in his independent career as a religious preacher and reformer. His educational scheme was afterwards carried out to a certain extent by the Albert College and the Victoria Institute for young ladies. Kesav also started a "Society of Theistic Friends" which, besides organising public lectures and getting up occasional meetings for the discussion of religious questions, addressed itself to the task of encouraging habits of study amongst Hindu ladies shut up in the zenana, by appointing standards, holding annual examinations and distributing prizes to successful candidates. But the most important and fruitful activity of Kesav in these days was the extensive mission tour which he undertook. He visited Bombay, Calicut, Poona and Madras, and was received everywhere with warmth and enthusiasm. His visit subsequently led to the establishment of theistic congregations in Bombay and Madras. "This pioneer expedition of Kesav," says Mr. Mazumdar,

with the propaganda of the Brahma Samaj, suggested to his mind the possibility of the formation of a grand theistic organization which would include within its operations all the provincial centres of enlightenment, thought and reformed activity. The idea of a Brahma Samaj for all India thus rose in his mind for the first time.

But the most notable work, in one sense, to which our hero put his hand about this time was the promotion of intercaste marriages, a step that, among other similar causes, led to his subsequent secession from the parent Brahma Samaj. The first of such marriages took place in 1862, and the second in 1864.

They alarmed both the Maharshi and the party of cautious elderly people by whom he was surrounded. The latter worked upon his fears and persuaded him to reconsider the relations of the Samaj to the whole subject of social reform.

THE THREAD CONTROVERSY AND ITS ISSUE

It was this controversy which, when it became acute and took a certain turn, led to the separation of the two parties in the Brahma Samaj of which we have already spoken. It came about in the following manner. The Sangat, to which we have referred to at some length, developed an ideal of Brahma life and published it in the form of a booklet named *Brahma Dharmer Anusthan* or the Practice of Brahmaism. In this booklet it was set forth that a Brahma should not conform to idolatrous rites, should eschew all caste distinctions and discard the sacrificial thread, which is a badge of caste and *deva*-worship. The Maharshi, though not a member of the Sangat, had always respected its members and encouraged their endeavours to follow a consistent Brahma life. He had even been won over to their views of rejecting all caste distinctions and discarding the sacrificial thread. On the publication of *Brahma Dharmer Anusthan*, he threw away his own thread, as he had promised to do, and henceforth, for a long time, discontinued investing the other members of his family with the thread on the occasion of the *upanayan* ceremony. But the forward party was not satisfied with this. They

proceeded further and insisted that all the preachers of the Samaj who took part in idolatrous ceremonies at home and had the sacrificial thread on them, should be dismissed from their offices and only those retained who were consistent Brahmas according to their ideal. The Maharshi agreed to their proposal and dismissed the thread-bearing ministers. Naturally these gentlemen felt deeply mortified and thought by what means, if any, they could check what they regarded as the headlong course of the youngsters. Their idea of Brahmaism was very different from that of the latter. They had, in their days, and in their own way, suffered not a little unpopularity and persecution for their profession of Brahmaism. But their Brahmaism meant only the living of a morally correct life and the spiritual worship of God instead of the ceremonial worship current in the country. They had never thought that it involved the violation of caste rules, the discarding of the sacrificial thread, non-conformity to idolatrous rites on the occasion of domestic *samskaras* or ceremonies and consequent ex-communication from the orthodox society. Neither the Maharshi's moderate scheme of leaving off idolatrous portions from the domestic *samskaras* nor Kesav's scheme of thoroughgoing non-conformity approved itself to them. The latter, they distinctly said, involved the utter disrapture of Hindu Society as it then stood and still stands. Its very basis is the distinction of castes, and when this goes, nothing seems to remain that can distinguish

it from other societies. They were not prepared for this disrupture, this radical reform or revolution, either from conviction or want of courage. And they found that the Maharshi, notwithstanding his earnest endeavour to lead a conscientious and self-consistent life, shared in their repugnance to a revolutionary programme. His was an essentially cautious and conservative disposition. He wanted reforms, but he wished that they should come slowly. He was pious, deeply pious, but he lacked Kesav's fiery enthusiasm and bold disregard of consequences in following an ideal. Both the men were deeply religious, but their religions differed not a little in their essential characters. The Maharshi's piety was fundamentally Hindu in its nature, whereas Kesav's was distinctly Christian. The leading feature in the former's religion was knowledge of God and rejoicing in him; that in the latter's the sense of sin and the attainment of holiness. The former's ideals were the contemplative *rishis* of India, the latter's Jesus Christ and the Christian martyrs and reformers. To Kesav personal religion and social reform were vitally connected with each other, parts of the same integral whole; to the Maharshi social reform was a matter of personal taste and inclination and had no essential relation to inner religion. Two men of such diverse character, both highly gifted with the power of leading other people, could not long live and work together. However, on the present occasion, the old school of Brahmas worked upon the Maharshi's fears of the dis-

rupture of Hindu society through Kesav's revolutionary programme, at any rate the Brahma Samaj being prematurely cut off from the parent society and thereby being incapacitated, as they thought, from effecting any reform in it. They must have marked that in discarding his own sacrificial thread and insisting on all Brahmana Brahmas preaching from the Samaj pulpit following the same practice, he had overstepped the real growth of his own mind, for they found him looking with repugnance upon the intercaste marriages that had been celebrated through the exertions of the younger party of the Samaj. They pointed out to him that unless he made up his mind to part company with these revolutionaries, he must be prepared to see their programme being carried out before his eyes and ostensibly under his *aegis*. The Maharshi's fears were aroused, and he felt that his love and respect for Kesav and his followers had dragged him as it were far beyond the limits within which he meant to keep in his plan of reform. Slowly but steadily he determined to recede, and if his recession necessitated his parting from his young friends, even to part from them. Awkwardly at first, and then boldly, he took the steps necessary to deprive the younger party of the power they had gained over the Samaj. He acted as the sole trustee of the Samaj, ignoring the rudimentary and imperfect constitution and committee-government which then existed in it. A cyclone having damaged the Samaj building, it was under repairs, and the

congregation had been meeting for some weeks in the Maharshi's own house. One meeting day, (in 1864) the service was made to begin somewhat earlier than the usual time and two thread-bearing ministers, who had been dismissed in the way referred to, were re-installed on the *vedi*. When Kesav and the threadless ministers who had been placed in charge of the *vedi* according to the former arrangement came in time to join and take part in the service, they were surprised to see the change made. They protested, but they were told that in the Maharshi's own house he had every right to make any arrangement he chose. But this did not satisfy the objectors, for they felt and said that it was not a private service, but the public service of the Brahma Samaj and that the Maharshi had no right to interfere. They also assured him that if the wishes of the Brahma public were thus set at naught, they would be obliged to leave the Samaj and set up another Samaj in which the voice of the Brahma public would prevail. This bold attitude of the younger party made the Maharshi throw off his reserve. He reconstructed the Samaj council, weeding it of all members of the party; he put one of his own sons and a thread-bearing Brahma in place of Kesav and his friend Pratap, who were respectively Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Samaj; he took the *Tattvabodhini Patrika* from the hands of Kesav's party, who then started the *Dharma-tattva* as their Bengali organ. The *Indian Mirror* was claimed by Kesav as his paper and was hence-

forth published independently of the Maharshi's control. Thus the two parties virtually parted from each other, but the actual separation took place and developed into a schism nearly two years later.

THE INTERVAL

The interval was marked by Kesav's fruitless attempt to introduce a constitution into the Samaj and have its affairs managed by the voice of the Brahma public, by his successful organisation of a mission department independently of the Samaj, and the public enunciation of the principles which should guide the larger church he was preparing to establish. The mission department was formed with a number of zealous and energetic men who formed the nucleus of the future Samaj, and who, with one or two exceptions, followed him through thick and thin all his life. All hope of a reconciliation with the older party was lost when, after a lecture by Kesav on "Struggles for Religious Independence and Progress in the Brahma Samaj," a representation was sent to the Maharshi by the younger party proposing a certain compromise and an unfavourable reply was sent to them. Of the lecture referred to the historian of the Brahma Samaj says:

In point of eloquence it was a remarkable production and may justly be regarded as the first trumpet-blast of the coming schism. It secured many new adherents to the progressive cause. Again:—

In this lecture he laid before the Brahmo public what he considered to be the high-handed dealings of the authorities of the Calcutta Brahma Samaj, and the failure of the younger party to introduce something like constitutional control over its affairs. There were passionate appeals [in it] upholding the

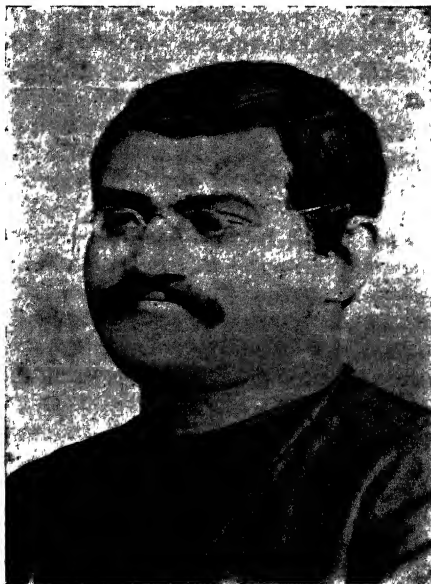
religion of the Brahma Samaj as a liberal religion which encouraged liberty of thought and action, and sought to establish true brotherhood amongst men.

"On the same day," continues Pandit Sastri, "a representation was sent to Devendranath in which, amongst other requests, the following points were chiefly urged :

(1) Neither the Acharya (minister) nor the Upacharya (assistant minister) nor the Adhyeta (reader) of the Brahma Samaj should hold any badge symbolical of caste or sectarian distinctions. (2) "If you do not consent to adopt the system described above with regard to Divine worship, you will oblige us by allowing the Brahma public to hold their service in the Brahma Samaj premises on a separate day."

The Maharshi, in his reply, expressed his inability to comply with these requests on grounds which have already been sketched above. "When they," he said, "who have defended the Brahma Samaj so long according to their own idea, preserve that idea even now, how can I deprive them of their former privileges?" The proposal of holding a separate service in the Samaj for the younger party he regarded as fraught with mischief. "This correspondence," says Pandit Sastri, "to all intents and purposes closed the controversy between the two parties, and the real schism may be regarded to have taken place from this time."

Three remarkable utterances of Kesav belong to this period of interval between his virtual and actual secession from the Calcutta or Adi Brahma Samaj. The first is a tract called "True Faith," a body of pithy, aphoristic sayings on the nature and practical effects of a living faith in God. It has always com-



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manded great respect from all followers and admirers of Kesav and has gone through many editions. The second was his lecture on "Jesus Christ, Europe and Asia," and the third that on "Great Men." These two lectures accentuated the theological difference between the two parties in the Brahma Samaj. They showed a type of Brahmaism very different from the type professed by the Maharshi and his adherents. The profound reverence for Jesus Christ which Kesav gave expression to in his first lecture, while it raised a hope in the minds of the Christian community that he was on his way to a full acceptance of Christianity, offended the older class of Brahmas in whose mind Christ and Christianity were identified with the doctrine of a mediator between God and man. The second lecture was delivered to allay these apprehensions, but failed to do so. Its substance is that there is a class of men who, by the great powers with which they are gifted, constitute a special revelation of God, a revelation distinct from nature and the minds of ordinary men. They form a chain, as it were, and "we must not neglect that chain or any link in that chain of prophets." Jesus is "the prince of prophets." The principles enunciated in this lecture were afterwards elaborated into Kesav's doctrine of Dispensations according to which the old systems of religion are, in their essence, all divinely inspired dispensations for the salvation of man, and Kesav's Brahmaism is the New Dispensation in which all old dispensations are

harmonised. As the harmoniser of all old dispensations in the New Dispensation, Kesav, according to his more devoted followers, is the centre of this last dispensation. Kesav's eloquence and enthusiasm carried thousands with him. But there were men from the very beginning who read the later developments of his creed into these early utterances of his and predicted the establishment, in the Brahma Samaj, of a sectarian religion with a human centre more or less like the prophetic religions of old and very different from the simple Theism of Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Maharshi Devendranath Tagore with its direct appeal to Intuition and Reason.

THE BRAHMA SAMAJ OF INDIA

Kesav's new church, the "Brahma Samaj of India," was formally established on the 11th November, 1866, amidst some opposition offered by some members of the old church. Besides the resolution founding the new organisation, there was one relating to the publication of a compilation of theistic texts from different scriptures and another laying down the duty of presenting a farewell address to Devendranath Tagore (first called 'Maharshi' in that address), conveying to him the love and reverence of the seceding members. "Curiously enough," says the historian of the Brahma Samaj, "among the many resolutions passed at this meeting there was none appointing office-bearers, or a governing council or auditors, or public functionaries of any kind." Notwithstanding the fact that the seceders had

protested strongly against the autocratic proceedings of the leaders of the old Samaj and advocated the introduction of constitutional principles into its management, they were either quite ignorant of the real meaning and requirements of a constitutional mode of government or had the idea of managing their new Samaj as autocratically as the old leaders had managed theirs. "In the absence of any office-bearer," we are told, "Babu Umanath Gupta, the President of this (inaugural) meeting, had to call the next meeting of the new Samaj in 1867, when Mr. Sen was appointed Secretary." That Kesav meant his Samaj to be a Theocracy, as has sometimes been asserted, seems to be indicated by the fact that he opposed the proposal of electing a President.

"We wanted naturally," says Mr. Mazumdar, "to make Kesav the head of the society so formed. But he declined; he caused it to be declared in a resolution that the Brahma Samaj of India had no human head, 'God alone was its head.' Kesav modestly undertook to be its Secretary."

"No wonder," says Pandit Sastri, "that another schism on constitutional lines became necessary afterwards."

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

The establishment of an independent church naturally gave a great impetus to mission work and Kesav made extensive tours to East Bengal, the North-Western Provinces and the Punjab. His piety, essentially Christian in its beginnings, now developed towards the form prevalent among the Bengal Vaishnavas. Himself born of a devout Vaishnava

family, Kesav was fortunate—some would perhaps say unfortunate—in having as one of his zealous co-adjutors a descendant of one of the great leaders of the Vaishnava movement of the sixteenth century under Chaitanya. This disciple introduced into the new Samaj Vaishnava hymns, Vaishnava instruments of music, the *khol*, *kartal* and *ektara*, hitherto despised by even the upper and respectable classes of orthodox Hindus, and the Vaishnava mode of *nagar-sankirtan* or street-singing, also hitherto confined to the lower classes. New hymns in the simple and touching language of the Vaishnavas set to Vaishnava tunes, were composed and sung with great enthusiasm. The life of Chaitanya, “the prophet of Nadia,” and his more famous followers, began to be studied and admired. The Brahma Samaj services, into which extempore praise and prayer were now more largely introduced than was the case with the fixed liturgy of the parent Samaj, were now no more the quiet and solemn things they were under the old leader. They were characterised by stirring appeals to the heart and the imagination and pervaded by loud outbursts of feeling. All these were no doubt indications of a real growth in piety and those who know anything of real inner religion must appreciate their value.

But they also led to excesses, and that quite naturally. The type of piety developed was essentially Puranic—legendary or traditional—whether it was inspired by Christian or Vaishnava ideals. Its basis was mere faith and practical experiences inter-

preted by faith. This is the common character of both Christian and Vaishnava piety. The other type—the vedantic or philosophical—was wholly lost sight of since the secession from the Adi Samaj. In the excitement of sweet and rapturous feelings the mind was let loose from the anchorage of introspective meditation and the solid ground of philosophical insight into reality. The consequence was that the devotees began to look for their divinity not within but without. Kesav began to be looked upon as a mediator and saviour, and divine honours began to be paid to him. "They prostrated and abased themselves," says Mr. Mazumdar, "before him most utterly; they began to talk of him in extravagant phraseology such as 'lord,' 'master' and 'saviour,' so that all this soon provoked comment." Again:

The abnormal excitement of emotions, first begun at Monghyr, undoubtedly emasculated a good many unripe minds in Kesav's church. No doubt a tendency to exaggerated notions about Kesav's place and functions in the Brahma Samaj became chronic in the constitution of some of his nearest and dearest friends.

All this led to an agitation against Kesav in which two of his own close followers took a leading part and in which the leaders of the Adi Brahma Samaj joined zealously, writing articles and publishing pamphlets against what they regarded as the objectionable tendencies of the new Samaj. The agitation greatly subsided on Kesav's public declaration that he did not approve of the way in which some of his friends honoured him. But it never entirely died away.

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"Henceforth," says his biographer, "in the Brahma Samaj there were two strong parallel parties always present, one of whom honoured Kesav almost to the point of worship, and the other consistently undervalued him, suspected his principles, and denied him his true position. Of these two parties Kesav unreservedly preferred and trusted the former."

The Mandir or temple of the new Samaj was meanwhile under building, and it was consecrated, with a solemn *utsav* or devotional festival, on the 22nd August, 1869. Kesav's career as a most successful-pulpit preacher may be said to have begun from this date. His Bengali became so chaste and elegant that noted Bengali authors like Bankim-chandra Chatterji came to hear him for the very object of listening to a good Bengali oration. His early ethical sternness melted into a sweet flow of emotions. His language, notwithstanding its simplicity, became highly ornate and poetic, appealing alike to the cultured and the uncultured. The little chapel was filled to overflowing week after week, and on festive occasions hundreds filled the verandas, the space in the front and even the adjoining street. His sermons began to be published in the form of leaflets, and form, in their collection, a somewhat vast literature. His ministry became and still remains a model for preachers of religion.

VISIT TO ENGLAND

Early in 1870 Kesav visited England and stopped there for seven months. He was warmly received by all classes of people there, specially the Unitarian Christians, who arranged both his welcome and farewell meetings. He visited fourteen of the

chief towns of England and Scotland, and lectured or conducted services, occupying the pulpit of Baptist, Congregationalist and Unitarian chapels. He also spoke at numerous other meetings on political, social and educational subjects. His severe criticism of the treatment of the people of this country by the Anglo-Indians raised a storm of opposition here, which, however, subsided on his maintaining a calm and dignified attitude. Among the distinguished people he saw in England was Her Majesty Queen Victoria, who received him very warmly and evinced great interest in the social amelioration of India in her conversation with him.

REFORM WORK

Kesav came back from England with new ideas of reform and practical work. Shortly after his return he established a society whose membership was open to all, irrespective of race and creed. It was called the Indian Reform Association. It had several sections or departments of work. The cheap Literature section issued a weekly pice paper in Bengali called the *Sulabh Samachar* ('Cheap News') It was the fore-runner of the cheap periodical literature of the day, and had great success. Under the Female Improvement section a Normal School for ladies was established. Under the Temperance section lectures and meetings were organised, tracts written and a monthly temperance journal in Bengali, called *Madna Garal* ? ('Wine or Poison?') issued. A Band of Hope was also organised for the young. A Charity

section gave relief to the poor in the shape of alms and medicine. An Industrial School was established for giving instruction in technical arts, and a Working man's Institution for the elementary education of the poorer classes. A school for boys established by a Brahma came under the management of the Association under the name of the Calcutta School. It was afterwards renamed Albert School and was gradually raised to the status of a second grade college. Two more institutions, not connected with the Indian Reform Association, were latterly established by Kesav. One of them was the "Bharat Assam" a joint home for Brahma families, and the "Brahma Niketan," a boarding institution for young men. To these were added much later the Albert Hall, the Albert Institute and the Victoria College for the higher education of women according to the peculiar ideas entertained by him on this subject.

But the most important act of Kesav's career as a reformer was the passing of the Marriage Act called Act III of 1872. Before it was passed, he had, as President of the Indian Reform Association, written to the leading medical men of the country and brought out important pronouncements from them on the proper marriageable age of Indian girls. All of them severely condemned the prevailing custom of child-marriage, and most of them agreed in fixing 16 as the minimum marriageable age for girls. As a starting point for further reform, 14 was fixed as a minimum age and embodied as a clause in the proposed Marriage

Bill. The history of the Bill, which is a long one, as it met with great opposition from both the orthodox society and the Adi Brahma Samaj, may be briefly told thus. As Brahma marriages, from the very beginning, dispensed with *deva*-worship and fire-sacrifices, and latterly rejected the distinction of castes, their validity as Hindu marriages was always open to question, and as they were not solemnized according to any other recognised law or custom, their legality was doubtful. The Advocate-General, being consulted on the point, pronounced them as illegal. The Hindu Pandits consulted by Kesav condemned both the Adi Samaj and Brahma Samaj of India forms of marriage as un-Sastraic. This led Kesav to present a Bill to the Legislative Council for legalising Brahma marriages. It was at first proposed in the form of a general Native Marriage Bill giving permission to all non-Christians to marry under its provisions. But in this form it was violently opposed by the orthodox Hindu society. It then came before the Legislature as a Brahma Marriage Bill; but the Adi Brahma Samaj opposed it in this form. Their contention was that as the Brahmas formed an integral part of the Hindu community, and as the Adi Brahma Samaj form of marriage was essentially, as they thought, a Hindu form, there ought not to be anything like a Brahma Marriage Act to which all Brahmas should be subject. This led to the passing of the Act in its present form. It is now purely a Civil Marriage Act,* giving permis-

sion to marry under its provisions to all who declare themselves as not professing Hinduism, Christianity, Muhammadanism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. The minimum age for the bridegroom is 18, and for the bride 14. Widow and intercaste marriages are allowed, and so is the dissolution of marriage under extreme conditions. Polygamy under any condition is made penal. The Brahmas of Kesav's church hailed the passing of the Act, as it gave them a much needed relief, but the negative declaration of faith required by it was regarded by many as a hardship. But they submitted to it, because without it the Law could not be passed. Its purely civil character is remedied by them by supplementing its secular part, (which is gone through under the direction of a Registrar appointed by Government) with religious ceremonies conducted by their ministers and priests.

THE KUCH BEHAR MARRIAGE

It now remains to refer to an important episode in the life of Kesav: and that is what was known as the Kuch Behar Marriage. Kuch Behar is a small native state to the north of Bengal. It is ruled over by an ancient family who seem, by their features, to be aboriginal Mongolians, but who claim to be Kshatriyas. Though orthodox Hindus by faith, the Rajas, like many ancient Hindu princes, feel free to choose their brides from any caste they please. In 1878, the ruling prince was a minor in his sixteenth year under the guardianship of the British Government, which had given him

a good English education. It now wished to give him the benefits of a visit to Europe, but felt it necessary to get him married,—to an educated bride, if possible,—before sending him there. It sought Kesav's eldest daughter, who was then under 14. Kesav thought the call had come from God himself, and consented. He laid down certain conditions under which the union should take place. It should be virtually a betrothal, to be consummated on the bridegroom attaining the age of 18, and the bride 16. The Raja should declare himself a Brahma or Theist. The rites should be Brahmic or at any rate free from idolatry. They should be preceded by a Brahma service, and a Brahma priest should join the Raja's orthodox priest in conducting the ceremony. The Government and the bridegroom's party agreed to these conditions, while Kesav, in his turn, besides consenting to have a thread-bearing priest to officiate at in his daughter's marriage, a concession so very repugnant to him in the days of his secession from the Adi Samaj, also yielded to the bridal party's demand that it should be his younger brother, Krishnavihari, and not he, who should give away the bride, because he had lost caste by his visit to England. These concessions may have emboldened the bride's party to think that many others might be made if Kesav were pressed hard, and before the latter started with his daughter for Kuch Behar the former let him know by wire that the Brahmo rites he had stipulated for would not be allowed in the marriage. * Kesav left for

Kuch Behar in spite of this warning and found himself in a veritable lion's den. The prince had indeed declared himself to be a Theist, but Kesav's other demands were rejected one after another, and it became clear that the Government as well as the Raja's orthodox guardians were resolved to maintain the Hindu character of the marriage, and this could not be done unless certain essential orthodox rites were performed, even though the bride might not take part in them. In great uncertainty Kesav went to the place where the ceremony was to take place. He found the spot where the bride and bridegroom sat with the priests enclosed by a hedge of bamboo sticks, and idolatrous symbols placed there. He, with a small number of his followers, had to sit outside the hedge and to conduct a short Brahma service, which was drowned by the noise of *tom-toms*. The *mantras* were, by the repeated efforts of the Brahma priest, expurgated of the names of Vedic deities, but the *homa*, the fire sacrifice, to which Kesav had specially objected, did take place. He was allowed only to take away his daughter when the sacrifice began, the prince alone taking part in it. This, briefly, is the way in which the marriage took place, and it pleased no party. When the great body of Brahmas, specially, heard of it, they were offended beyond measure. Most of them had strongly protested against the marriage proposal on obvious grounds. It was a child marriage, against which evil Kesav had* hitherto fought so long and so

successfully. The un-Brahmaic features which characterised the marriage had been already anticipated by them. Now, when the worst they had thought of had come to pass, they, the members of Kesav's congregation, deposed him from his place as their minister at a meeting called by himself. But the proceedings of the meeting were disturbed beyond measure by young men of Kesav's party and thus their validity was questioned by him. Besides, the Mandir had as yet no trust deed and legally belonged to him. He kept possession of it through the help of the Police and the ministers appointed by his opponents could not therefore use it for their purpose. Babu Pratapchandra Mazumdar, as the Assistant Secretary of the Brahma Samaj of India, was requisitioned by a large number of Brahmas to call a meeting of the Samaj to consider Kesav's conduct as Secretary, but he refused to call such a meeting until the excited feelings of the Brahmas should have subsided. This was thought as a most unconstitutional procedure and the question of establishing a new Samaj on a purely constitutional basis began to be discussed. Meanwhile a large body of the members of Kesav's congregation had been worshipping in a hired house, led by new ministers appointed in the meeting referred to. The new Samaj was formally organised on the 15th May, 1878, under the name of the Sadharan (Universal) Brahma Samaj and a new Mandir, much larger than Kesav's, built in 1881, and the seceding congregation removed to it.

LAST YEARS

The secession of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj had a most injurious effect on Kesav's health and soon after it he fell seriously ill, so much so that his life was despaired of. "In the delirium of the brain-fever which prostrated him," says Mr. Mazumdar,

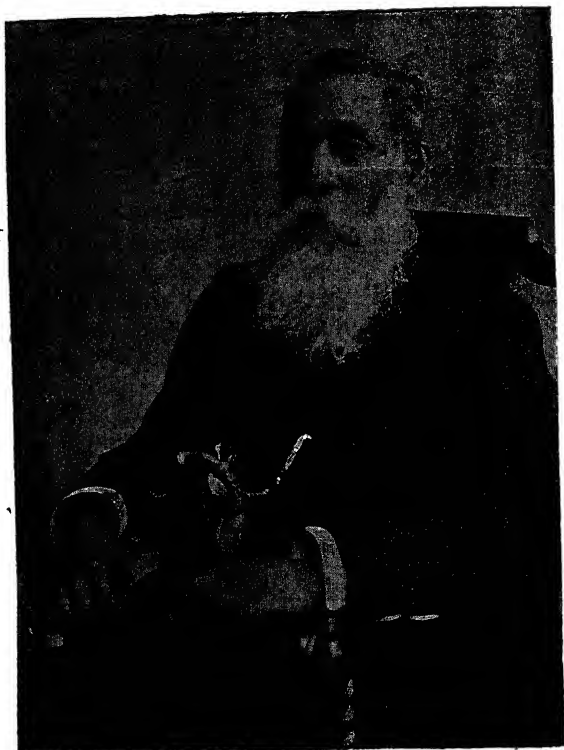
he talked wildly of the dangers to his church, the bitter animosities and ill-treatments which dogged him, and there was no doubt that both physically and mentally he was pierced with pain at the conduct of those who had deserted him.

He recovered, but the effects of the attack seemed to have continued more or less throughout the five years he still lived, manifesting themselves in the feverish excitement that henceforth characterised his actions and utterances. The ceaseless exertions he made to keep up the life of his section of the Brahma Samaj and to disseminate the new ideas which now came to his mind in rapid succession, soon broke down his health. Symptoms of Diabetes appeared in him in 1882 and developed with great rapidity. But his activity did not cease till only a few days before the end. In spite of his broken health his great eloquence remained unimpaired, and in his famous town-hall lectures delivered year after year on the occasion of the Brahma Samaj Anniversary, he expounded his leading ideas before vast and admiring audiences. He introduced a number of ceremonies, such as Pilgrimages to Saints, the Home Ceremony, the Baptismal Ceremony, the Lord's Supper, the Flag Ceremony, the Arati, the Vow of Poverty, the Savitri Brata, the Nightingale Bratā etc., into his church to give con-

creteness, as he hoped, to the otherwise abstract Theism of the Brahma Samaj. Some of these have found a permanent place in his section of the Samaj. Brahmaisim, specially the peculiar form of the faith taught by Mr. Sen, had already been called by him "a new dispensation" in his lecture on "Behold the Light of Heaven in India" delivered in 1876. He now began to make frequent use of the term "New Dispensation," and his peculiar views, with the ceremonies and vows introduced by him, came henceforth to be known by this name and distinguished from the simpler creed held by the general body of Brahmas. The principles of the New Dispensation* were expounded in detail week after week in the *New Dispensation* newspaper which was started by Mr. Sen about this time. The principles,—moral, religious, and social—that should guide his followers, and the rituals they should follow in performing their domestic ceremonies, were all formulated by Kesav in a book named the *New Samhita* written by him in the last year of his life. He also wrote about this time a short treatise on *Yoga: Subjective and Objective*, in which he gave his deeper experiences of spiritual life and his appreciation of the yogic experiences of ancient Hindu sages. Somewhat earlier, he had delivered a series of autobiographical discourses from his pulpit on the general heading of *Jivan Veda*, which have been published separately

* The birth of the New Dispensation* was formally announced in 1880.

and have lately been translated into English. In his very last days he caused a domestic chapel called the Nava Devalay to be constructed in the compound of his house. Its consecration, which took place on the 1st January, 1884, was his last public act. The great reformer passed away on the 8th, having shown exemplary patience and trust in God in bearing the agonies of his last days. The funeral was attended by thousands of people of all races and denominations. The ashes were collected and interred in an enclosure in front of the Devalay and a beautiful tomb erected over them. The same enclosure also contains the tombs of Kesav's wife and departed children. Followers and admirers from all parts of the country, sometimes from far-off lands, visit the spot as a place of pilgrimage, specially on the 8th of January, when a devotional festival takes place there. Anniversary meetings take place on the day in all important towns in the country. Kesav is not merely the leader of a particular denomination. He is a national hero, a nation-builder in the best sense of the term. His peculiar views may be confined to a comparatively small number of men and women, but the ideal of purity, love of God and love of man taught by him and exemplified in his life, command the respect of all, to whatever race or creed they may belong.



PRATAPCHANDRA MAZUMDAR

Pratapchandra Mazumdar

INTRODUCTION

PRATAPCHANDRA MAZUMDAR, writer, orator and theologian, was a great leader of the Brahma movement and in many respects the most eminent of the immediate disciples of Kesavchandra Sen. But he belonged not merely to the small community which recognised him as one of its great leaders, but to the whole country, and in a sense to the whole world. His sympathies were wide, and his literary and missionary activities far-reaching. The most important of his works were published in America, and some of his most remarkable addresses delivered there; and his English and American admirers would perhaps equal, if not actually exceed, in number those who admire and appreciate him in this country. His writings, though written, as they could not but be, from the standpoint of the Brahma Samaj, are so liberal in views and sentiments, that they may be read with profit and without the least offence being felt by men of the most varying opinions. Being written, as all his works are with the exception of two little Bengali treatises, in most elegant English, they afford a great literary treat apart from the value of the teachings embodied in them. A sketch of the

life and teachings of such a valued writer and worker cannot but be welcome, we hope, to all, irrespective of creed or class.

FAMILY AND PARENTAGE

Mr. Mazumdar belonged to the same caste as his great master, Kesav, and was distantly related to him. It is called the Vaidya (physician) caste, one which is peculiar to Bengal, having no corresponding caste in other parts of India. It is a high non-Brahmana caste equal in social rank to, if not higher than, the Kayasthas, who are scattered all over India except Madras. Many Vaidya families, though not all, wear a sacrificial thread and claim to be Ambashtas, who are said to have descended from a Brahmana father and a Vaisya mother. The caste, though numerically very small, is a highly respectable and influential one and is the most literate of all castes in Bengal according to the last census. Pratap was born in 1840 at his maternal grandfather's house at Banseria, a noted village 24 miles north of Calcutta but his infancy was spent at Garifa on the Hughli, not far from Calcutta, a village which is the ancestral seat of both the Sens and the Mazumdars. Mr. Mazumdar's description of his own childhood reminds one of Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* and lends a remarkable testimony to the truth of the poet's reflections. This description is embodied in a biographical sketch attached to Mr. Mazumdar's *Heart-beats* and is written by the

Rev. S. J. Barrows, President of the Chicago Parliament of Religions and a great admirer of Mr. Mazumdar. Mr. Mazumdar says of the experiences of his child-life :

"Nor do I ever get tired of reflection on these infant experiences. Like some invisible writing on the wall, which fades and re-kindles, and tales away again, the sense of infancy clings to me. It revives in the purest moments of my being. It is lost when I fall away. The faith is in me that the lustreful joyousness, free-born innocence, and fearless safety of infancy are recoverable, partly here, wholly elsewhere. Of true life, in any stage of its growth, nothing dies; whether of joy or wisdom, of love or purity, all that is true is put into the man from the Eternal who surrounds him."

Of his father, Mr. Mazumdar says:

"In the dim, far, sad past I trace my Father's face, a large, generous, loving face, in which great impulsiveness was written in strong characters. He was a stout, florid, full-sized man, very kind, very angry, frank, artless, warm-hearted beyond discretion but not very learned. He was educated up to the ordinary standard of those times, was a teacher in the Hughly College for some time, and then a senior clerk in the bank. I believe he had some leanings toward the Brahma Samaj; for I faintly recollect he had some volumes of the *Tattvabodhini Patrika*, the organ of the Adi Brahma Samaj, in his room. Oh that he had lived a few years longer for me to have known him better! Oh that he had gone after putting me under the care of some one able to take care of me and teach me! But he died very early, too soon. In fact he could not have been more than thirty-two when he died, and I was about nine. He left me an orphan under the care of my young mother, who did not know what to do under the paralysis of her great sorrow. The village woodmen speak of him with tears in their eyes. He always lent them money, took it not, but gave them more. The village widows talk of him to bless his memory. And the village boys, who have grown into older men than myself, mention him with honour and affection. He taught them and read with them, and preferred them before his own son. He often showed severity to me outwardly; but I know he always loved his boy in the heart of his heart, with all the fulness and fondness that there was in him.

Mr. Mazumdar's memories of his mother are even more vivid and tender. He says of her :

She was a beautiful being, young, high-minded, intelligent, queenly in her features, She was unlettered, like other women of her time; but she was a lady with the high training of her caste and her position. She became a widow at about twenty-five, and loved me as a heart-stricken widow can love her growing son. She wished I should be comfortable and learn the best that a boy of my age should. But her means were very limited and she could have no hand in my education.

Mr. Mazumdar's account of the death of his mother gives an idea of the way in which widows are treated in the best Hindu families of the old order. Almost every Hindu, if he were sincere, could tell a more or less similar story if called upon to do so. We shall let Mr. Mazumdar himself speak on the matter in his inimitable way :

She often over-worked and tried herself and seemed anxious for nothing except her death. That death at last came. It came on the night of her fortnightly fast, in July 1858. I returned rather late from Kesav's house, found she had gone to bed, complaining that she had a slight disorder of the stomach. As she was subject to such complaints, I did not think much about it. Later, at about 1 o'clock, I was called up and learned she was very ill. Hastening to her side, I found her voiceless, deaf, and livid. She had got the worst type of cholera. Everybody in the house was up except my uncle, who was the Karta (Head). Nobody seemed to care to call in a doctor: everybody was evidently prepared for her death. My perplexity and distress may be imagined. Rushing to speak to my uncles, I was not admitted to their rooms; and no one, not even a servant, would go for a medical man. Maddened and despairing, I rushed into the streets, tried to call up Kesav and other friends; but every gate was shut for the night. I ran to a doctor's house in the neighbourhood, but his servant turned me out. I don't know into how many places I went and pleaded my poor, dying mother's case, but could get no medical help. Returning home by about dawn, I found her in a state of collapse, but still conscious. On seeing me, she struck her forehead with her hand to show that all hope was gone. A doctor came, not long after, but it was too late. She ceased to breathe by about 8 A.M. I was motherless at nineteen. What need to bewail the world's hard-heartedness? What need to curse the selfish cruelty of men and women to the wretched, forsaken Hindu widow? To them she was a widow only: to me, my dear

mother, the sole guardian and friend I had in all the world.I do not care whether all or many widows remarry: but I do feel they should be more loved, nursed, and cared for, more humanity shown to them. It is not true that they are always persecuted, not true at least in Bengal. They willingly court the miseries under which so many, like my loved and honoured mother, die. But if men were more compassionate, and society recognised their right to the commonest necessities of life, perhaps they would be less hard on themselves, and many a heart-stricken son would be spared the misery I felt when I found my mother's beloved life sink under the load of the world's neglect and indifference.

EDUCATION

Having passed through the usual *pathshalas* and school courses, young Mazumdar entered the Presidency College. He spent two years there, making good progress in all studies except Mathematics. His deficiency in this branch he attributes to the too frequent promotions with which he was favoured in the school department, and it was perhaps this deficiency that led him to leave college without taking a degree. Henceforth he was left to self-education and to the influence exerted by his friends and companions. For sometime the latter was not of the most desirable character: but he was soon thrown by Providence into contact with the two great souls who exerted the greatest influence on his character. They were Maharshi Devandranath Tagore and Brahmananda Kesavchandra Sen. The former stood before him "in his character as a finished piece of workmanship, to be admired, loved and, as far as possible, imitated." Kesav was yet unfinished. But he had "the fascination of a growing beautiful character," says Mr. Barrows.

He grew with and into us, from within, he was in perpetual contact with us. He was most natural, and made everything about him as wholesome as the earth and air. He was so true, strong, warm, elevated and magnetising that he became to me really a part of myself, the better part. He was like another self to me, a higher, holier, diviner self. Yes: we grew together, he in one direction, and I in a somewhat different. I was conscious of the difference; but he grew into me, and I grew into him, in a relationship which outlived the separation of death itself."

MARRIED LIFE

Mr. Mazumdar was married when he was only eighteen years old. The union, though a child-marriage, without choice on either side, proved to be a very happy one. Mr. Mazumdar's admiration for his wife, expressed in his own words, and his remarks on marriage as a divine institution, are worth reading, though one may not agree with all that he says:

Marriage, he says, "is an immortal mystery. The hand of destiny is surely on it. It is a God arranged adaptation. Saudamini, my intended wife, was about eleven, of course unlettered like other girls of her age. I had but glimpses of her once or twice before, but directly the ceremonies were completed I was over head and ears in love with her. Cupid is blind, and even child-marriage does not give him the fatal eyesight. I am sure that thousands have felt as I did. How is this love to be accounted for? An ardent, youthful pre-occupation of the mind, a sense of the inevitable, a fancy, a passing fun? Far, far from that. From the night of that far-off wedding, thirty-three years ago, down to this day, I have cherished my dear wife as if I had elected her from the choicest womanhood of the world; and my affection, true as it is, is but a pale, poor shadow beside the fadeless love and increasing service with which she has blessed my solitary life. There is indeed a mysterious dispensation in marriage, as in birth and death. Those who are led to it by the hand of God, as my poor little wife and I were, and accept the leading in filial obedience and child-like joy, find in it the strength, progress, repose, and guardianship of all their future life. I do not approve of child-marriages. I do not at all believe in unlimited courtships; but there is such a thing as pre-ordained purpose in every true marriage, and love at first sight does often mean union of life and heart for ever. The

mysterious power of the sacrament of marriage, if submitted to in a faithful spirit, may call forth what is deepest, purest and tenderest in man and woman; and marriage itself is sufficient for its pre-requisites and after-requisites. The mismated can improve their relations. The contrary-minded can make their path smooth if they have faith in marriage as a sacred institution. Men and women expect of each other more than can be got in life from their circumstances. All men are not the same, nor are all women. Each one is environed by peculiar disabilities, account for them as you may. And the wisest thing for all who marry is to know their respective limitations with the moral resolve never to ask anything beyond. Beauty of appearance, sweetness of temper, devotedness of service, readiness of sympathy, refinement of taste, are special blessings, and are, on the whole, evenly balanced in human households.

CONVERSION TO BRAHMAISM

Mr. Mazumdar signed the Brahma Samaj covenant in 1859. This in itself did not lead to any severance of connection with his relatives, but when in 1862 he took his wife to the house of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore on the day of Kesavchandra Sen's appointment to the Brahma Samaj ministry, he was subjected to a good deal of persecution. The Tagore family had lost caste, even before embracing Brahmanism, through Muhammadan influence. A letter was therefore sent to young Mazumdar, while at the Tagores,' to the effect that as he had violated the wishes of his guardians in taking his wife to the house of an ex-communicated man, he should no longer return to the ancestral house. But Mazumdar "determined for once to stand on his rights. He would cross the threshold and see what came of it. But his poor wife trembled from head to foot. How could she go and show her face to women who were so furious? Her husband took her firmly by the

hand and said, 'We must go.' All the houses in the neighbourhood were crowded; every house-top was full of women; every house-door was full of men. They were curious to see the destiny that awaited her. There was no open violence, but that fearful boycotting which was one of the consequences of ex-communication was immediately experienced. No cook would prepare their meals. No servant would touch their clothes. The people in the neighbourhood would not talk to them. The experience was painful and humiliating. His wife, in this emergency, managed things with the firmness, heartiness and industry which have always characterised her."

PREPARATION FOR LIFE'S WORK

Mr. Mazumdar served for a short time at the Bank of Bengal, but he soon found out his real work—the preaching of religion—and devoted himself to it with all the zeal that characterised him. His father left him a property worth about Rs. 15,000, but much of this was wasted through the mismanagement of his guardian, so that when a settlement was effected, it was found to be worth only Rs. 10,000. With this money Mr. Mazumdar subsequently bought his "Peace Cottage" near Kesavchandra Sen's "Lily Cottage." Latterly he built another house at Kurseong, below Darjiling, and called it the "Sailasram." At the time we are speaking of, Mr. Mazumdar's chief occupation was study and writing for the *Indian Mirror*, which was first started as a fortnightly by Kesavachandra Sen and his friends,

but which gradually became a weekly and then a daily. Mr. Mazumdar's studies at this time lay mostly in the line of general literature and philosophy. It is said that he was a voracious reader of novels and read almost every book of romance known to him. This seems to explain to some extent his great command over the English language and the refinement and elegance of his style. His connection with the *Mirror*, of which he was often the editor, was also of great use to him in forming his style.

AS A PREACHER OF RELIGION

In 1865 Mr. Mazumdar, with many others, seceded from the Adi Brahma Samaj under the leadership of Kesavchandra Sen. The secession was due to the difference in the types of religion he'd on the one hand by the old leader, Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, and on the other by Kesav and his followers. While the religion of the former was essentially Hindu and in favour of slow and cautious progress in social matters, that of the latter was essentially Christian, with a cosmopolitan flavour, and advocated radical reform in society. The immediate cause of the schism was Devendranath's re-installation of two Brahma preachers who had been dismissed for retaining their sacrificial threads, but whom Kesav and his party could not tolerate on the Samaj pulpit. After vain efforts to retain their influence in the parent Samaj the latter came out and founded in 1865 the "Brahma Samaj of India," of which Mr. Mazumdar was

appointed Assistant Secretary. He also became a minister of the Samaj and began to preach about this time. His prayers and sermons were greatly appreciated, and this appreciation grew with the growth of his influence and spiritual experience. His ministrations were at first in Bengali, and sometimes in Hindi, but from about the time he was thirty, he began to deliver public addresses in English. He gradually became one of our ablest and most eloquent speakers, and his influence was felt by vast audiences in this country, in England and in the United States of America. His delivery was slow, but dignified and impressive. He used the choicest words and the aptest figures and imagery, and all that he said was suffused with the glow of his deep emotions and spiritual experience.

AS A JOURNALIST

In or about 1872, Mr. Mazumdar began to edit and publish a yearly record of religious thought and missionary activity under the name of the *Theistic Annual*. This was followed by the *Theistic Quarterly Review*, and much later by the *Interpreter*, a monthly and, for sometime, a fortnightly journal. He also wrote for the *Dharmatattva*, the Bengali organ of the Brahma Samaj of India. When the *Indian Mirror* passed out of the hands of the Brahma leaders, and the *Liberal and New Dispensation* was started as the organ of Kesav's church, Mr. Mazumdar also wrote for it occasionally. He also contributed occasional articles on the principles of the Brahma Samaj.

to Anglo-Indian, English and American journals. Until 1882, when his first work, or at any rate his first important work, came out, his literary activity was confined to writing for the periodicals.

PART IN THE SECOND BRAHMA SCHISM

In 1878 the schism in the Brahma Samaj that followed the marriage of Kesavchandra Sen's eldest daughter with the then young Maharajah of Kuch Behar, took place, and the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, the third great section of the Brahma community, was established. Pandit Vijaykrishna Goswami, one of Kesavchandra's closest followers, with many others who had followed him more or less closely, joined the new organisation. Mr. Mazumdar might have done the same and for a time it seemed he might do so. Though deeply attached to Kesav and indebted to him for much of what was valuable in his own life, it was very widely known that he was an independent thinker and had never blindly followed his leader. He did not also quite approve of the marriage that formed the bone of contention. But nevertheless he clung to Kesav and condemned the schism. That movement was not, however, merely the result of the marriage. It was the joint result of the marriage and the clinging of Kesav and his friends to power and high offices in the church when a large party in it and, as it proved, an overwhelming majority demanded their retirement. When this party prayed for a public meeting to bring Kesav and his defenders to justice, Mr. Mazumdar, as Assistan

Secretary of the Samaj, refused to hold the meeting till the sensation caused by the marriage should cease. This conduct on his part seemed to the other party to be quite inconsistent with constitutional principles, the principles on which the Brahma Samaj of India was originally founded, and they proceeded to found a new church on a purely constitutional basis and leave the Brahma Samaj of India in the hands of its autocratic leaders. Mr. Mazumdar tried his utmost to prevent a schism. He, more than any one else, seems to have foreseen its far-reaching effects,—effects which he could not contemplate without deep pain. But the other party was beyond his power of dissuasion. He had completely alienated them by what seemed to them his imperious conduct and his ill-conceived defence of Kesav's conduct as regards the marriage. The schism came off and the seceding party lost the influence of Mr. Mazumdar's and his friends' teachings. But they did not quite forget the sweetness of his prayers and the uplifting effect of his preaching. Many of them occasionally attended his public services, and his public addresses were welcome to all. On one occasion the leaders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj drew him so far towards them as to induce him to pray and preach in their Samaj Mandir. But the differences, all centering more or less on Kesav's personality, ultimately proved too much, and though Mazumdar was always regarded as the most liberal-minded of all Kesav's closest followers, and though he had many differences with his brother

missionaries of the New Dispensation (the name latterly assumed by what remained of the Brahma Samaj of India after the schism, he remained entirely cut off from his friends and admirers in the Sadharan Brahma Samaj.

EXPOSITION OF BRAHMAISM

In 1882 appeared the first book, at any rate the first important book, written by Mr. Mazumdar. It consisted mostly of his public addresses and contributions to periodical literature, recast and partly rewritten, and was named *The Faith and Progress of the Brahma Samaj*. It was in three parts; (1) Speculative and Doctrinal; (2) Devotional and Practical; and (3) The New Dispensation. It thus professed to be a defence of the religion of the Brahma Samaj and an account of its missionary and other activities. But it was so only partly and rather imperfectly. On its speculative side it contained no reasoned and systematic exposition of Brahmaism, such as would convince, or even be fully intelligible to a non-Brahma wishing to know what Brahmaism is. The writer simply stated, with his usual wealth and elegance of language, what he believed Brahmaism to be. Far from reasoning, he represented Reason to be a very imperfect and untrustworthy guide and held out faith as the true guide to religion. He did not tell us what the test of true faith was and how it had to be distinguished from blind belief and superstition. However, let us hear a little what Mr. Mazumdar has to say on the 'faith'

to which he attaches so much importance. On the doctrine of "Intuition" which, according to both Maharshi Devendranath Tagore and Brahmananda Kesavchander Sen, is the basis of Theism or Brahmaism, Mr. Mazumdar writes:—

More than ten years ago the Samaj sought to place before the public, in sufficiently strong light, the universally recognised fact that religion, in its essential reality, is intuitive and natural to the human mind. Religion is an irrepressible instinct of human nature, which necessarily finds its embodiment in formal beliefs and principles, in ceremonial rules and observances, in external evidences and authorities, which, however divergent and erroneous, agree, when carefully analysed, in their original essence. This instinct involves certain necessary relations between the percipient mind of man and the divine realities that surround him within and without. The relations take shape among mankind in those elementary ideas about God, immortality, and human duty which are everywhere found. The very groundwork of religion is possible on certain primary and germinal convictions, more or less fully developed—nay sometimes very undeveloped indeed—to which all religious teachings, to be effective, must make their final appeal. Thus all religion, to guard itself in these days against the dogmatic denials and possible sophistries of prevalent scientific scepticism, against the conflicts and discrepancies of critical and historical evidence, has ultimately to establish itself on the supreme necessities of the human spirit. So far as its relations with mankind in general are concerned, apart from its exclusive authorities and testimonies, every religion must, in some measure, hold the ground common to all men, the ground of fundamental instinct and conviction which remains unshaken even when external evidence and authority are found to fail What, in short, is the meaning of the internal evidence of religion if there is not a secret but real fitness between the truths it teaches and the spontaneous spiritual perceptions of men? The religion of the Brahma Samaj is founded on these... The germs only, and the germs not merely of the religion of the Brahma Samaj, but of Christianity, Hinduism and Muhammadanism alike, are intuitions; the peculiarity of the Brahmas being that they build their faith thereon without the supernatural and historical ground-work which belongs distinctively to each of the rest. (pp. 67-73).

So far in regard to the "germs" of Brahmaism and those of all *theistic* religions. Mr. Mazumdar

quietly ignores the fact that there are atheistic or untheistic religions, such as Buddhism, Jainism and Comtism, to which his theory of Intuition does not apply. However, on what are the peculiarities of Brahmaism—those doctrines and practices which distinguish it from the other theistic religions—based? Not on Reason, according to Mr. Mazumdar, but on spiritual experiences. Reason has nothing to do with religion, its proper sphere being science. Let us hear of the authority on which he bases the peculiar doctrines of his religion. He says:

How have these and other doctrines of the Brahma Samaj come to be formed, is an important question. Most of the opponents and some of the friends of that institution are apt to suppose that the leader or leaders of the movement have, by great efforts of the understanding, by deliberation and mutual counsel, elaborated a system of opinions in which they and their followers believe. A greater mistake could not be. The leaders of the Brahma Samaj began their career by a strong protest against dogmatism, and if at the present moment they themselves have come to hold certain very definite views which they set forth with some show of authority and certainty, this fact must be accounted for. Now, the protests of the Brahma Samaj on the subject are as little understood as the doctrines it propounds. It is the lifeless mass of complex theology, inherited by tradition, enforced by external authority, unrealised by spiritual experience, contradicted repeatedly by the spirit of the times and the ascertained laws of things, that the Brahma Samaj repudiates. The worship of opinions as opinions, however sacred, is that every man who cares for living truth must condemn always. But there may be opinions of a quite different character. The great and really profound doctrines of religion are never formed by the laboured and artificial processes of self-imposed thought, but deposited within the mind in imperceptible accretions by the deep flow of spiritual impulses. As the soul seeks for light, life and inspiration, and the flood of divine influence sets in, it leaves behind certain impressions and experiences which, by repeated occurrence, settle and crystallize into definite shapes, being afterwards known and taught as the realities of religious life. When these are formulated and expressed in words they become what we call the doctrines of religion. The principles of the Brahma

Samaj, few and elementary as they are, have been the results of this inward process. The views, then, which the Brahma Samaj has expressed from time to time on the divine nature and attributes, the relations and attitudes which human nature must bear thereto, and the moral and spiritual relations of men to each other, are but deep internal experiences, repeatedly felt and sanctioned by the concurrence of many souls similarly circumstanced. Duties which have naturally suggested themselves in the train of such inward light; duties to individuals, to families, and to society, when performed faithfully, have come to take the shape of practical and social reforms. Whether we consider then the doctrines or the practices of the Brahma Samaj, they are the natural fruits of the action of the spirit of truth on the human heart. (Pp. 110-112).

But the "deep flow of spiritual impulses" which are said to be the sources of the doctrines of the Brahma Samaj may be quite subjective and leave behind very different impressions and experiences in different minds. Where are we to seek unity? Is there no objective standard which may be appealed to? Where Mr. Mazumdar sought this unity and objectivity, we may see from what he says on "Prophets" in the last part of his book. We quote again from him:

Spiritual life would be a trackless ocean, full of insidious dangers, without the loadstar and compass of prophetic guidance. We have to cultivate everyday relations with the prophets, receive everyday help from them, make constant communion with them in our daily devotions. All genuine spiritual life is the resurrection of the prophets. Prophetic character never dies, but is perpetually reproduced in the character of the faithful servants of God. The Spirit of spirits lives in each soul as the essence and embodiment of every form of spirituality which his Messiahs lived to establish. The prophets can never be comprehended apart from God and God can never be comprehended apart from his prophets. He makes his abode with the mysterious circle of his kindred spirits. Every prophet is a spiritual phase. Every prophet is a stage in the onward path to the Eternal. Every prophet is an everlasting consolation, an attained home, a sure promise of eternal life. Each prophet is different from the rest, yet not one of them can

be disregarded with impunity. All of them together make up the heaven in which the human soul lives here, and hopes to live hereafter. (Pp. 372, 373).

But how to discriminate between true and false prophets, and who is or are to interpret them, find out how much is universal in them and how much only personal, racial or local, and thus harmonize them? To these questions there is no clear answer in Mr. Mazumdar's book, such as may be quoted with effect. But the answer implied in it everywhere is that the authority for effecting this discrimination and harmony is the body of apostles that had gathered round Kesavchandra Sen. Of them he says in one place :

The twenty-four Brahma missionaries that we have got constitute the centre and foundation of the movement. They, are its chief servants, feeders, guardians, elders, apostles, writers, thinkers and ministers. The Brahma Samaj may be said to hang on them, to look up to them for moral, social, intellectual and spiritual strength.

The "twenty-four" missionaries spoken of here and named elsewhere, are or were, as long as they lived, all Mr. Sen's close adherents with the exception of one who, in a note below the list of names, is said to belong no longer to the Brahma Samaj of India, but to have joined the "Sadharan Samaj." This is the only mention in the book of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, though, when the book came out, the Samaj had been in existence for five years, had built its church, appointed its missionaries, published books and papers, established educational institutions and done other useful things. However, in the third and last part of Mr. Mazumdar's book,

he, as we have already mentioned, deals with the New Dispensation, the name by which the religion of Kesavchandra Sen and his followers began to be called by them soon after the secession of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. Mr. Mazumdar defends and explains in this part of his book the doctrines and practices with which Mr. Sen's name came to be identified more and more from the time referred to. Kesav could not find an abler advocate of his teachings than our author. The New Dispensation is seen at its best and in its most rational form (in spite of Mr. Mazumdar's repudiation of any function on the part of Reason in matters religious) in his writings. But it may as well be mentioned that Mr. Mazumdar was never recognised by his most ardent fellow-disciples of Kesav as the most faithful expounder of his teachings. They seemed to think that he, by trying to rationalise them, deprived them of their revealed and authoritative character. His differences with them after the death of the leader, partly due to their distrust of his strict faithfulness to the latter's teachings will be mentioned later on.

VISITS OF THE WEST

Mr. Mazumdar paid his first visit to England in 1874. In 1883 he re-visited England and extended his journey to America. "The memory of his visit," we quote from Dr. Barrows, "and the inspiration and enthusiasm it awakened, will still be fresh in the minds of many who read this book (Mr. Mazumdar's *Heart-beats*). He returned to India

by way of San Francisco, stopping in Japan and lecturing in the University." The experiences of these two visits to the West are recorded in his interesting *Sketches of a Tour Round the World*. On returning from his second visit to the West Mr. Mazumdar found that his great friend and leader, Kesavchandra Sen, had gone to a better world. The period following this event was the most troubled period of his life. But we shall speak of these troubles later on. In 1893 Mr. Mazumdar paid his third visit to the West. He attended the meeting of the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, where he read a paper on the "World's Religious Debt to Asia." "In Boston," we again quote from Dr. Barrows, "he was invited to deliver four lectures on India before the Lowell Institute. So great was the interest in these lectures, that he was induced to repeat them afternoons, under the same auspices, to a crowded hall. These lectures were reported and published in the *Christian Register*" (a Unitarian Weekly). They have since been published in a book form under the name of the "Lowell Lectures."

"THE ORIENTAL CHRIST"

In 1883 was published Mr. Mazumdar's "Oriental Christ." "This remarkable volume," says Dr. Barrows "was at once recognised as the product of a devout mind, active intellect and a glowing imagination. It was essentially a new contribution to Christology." In Mr. Mazumdar's Christology, however, there is no appeal either to the philosophic intellect or to the

historical sense of the reader. The author neither draws upon Metaphysics to show that the Lagos or Universal Christ incarnates himself in, and lighteth every man coming into the world, nor upon the newly founded science of Higher Biblical Criticism to reconstruct the real historical Christ out of the semi-mythological records of the New Testament. He simply explains, in the light of his spiritual experiences, the sayings and doings of Jesus as they are narrated in the gospels. As such, it is a very valuable book and will be read with great pleasure and profit by all devout persons. As to Mr. Mazumdar's exact position in regard to Jesus Christ, it will be found expressed in a brief but very clear form in another work of his, "The Spirit of God," Jesus, to him, is neither the Trinitarian Christian's third person in the Godhead nor the ordinary Theist's religious teacher, one among many. To him he is the embodiment of all human excellences, the human image of God's moral perfections and the very type of perfected humanity.

He is the type of humanity. Humanity broken up before and after is bound up in him, so that he is the human centre and bond of union in the religious organisations of mankind. . . . He taught us to be the sons of God. In all things did Jesus, so far as the times permitted, conform himself to the mind of God; that is to be the son of God.

This is the typical Unitarian Christianity of men like Channing and Martineau, and neither ordinary Brahmaism nor ordinary Hinduism. For holding this view Mr. Mazumdar has often been accused of being a disguised Christian. But though such a view is rare among Brahmas and Hindus, we do not see that it is

anyway opposed to the fundamental principles of either Brahmaism or liberal Hinduism.

DIFFERENCES WITH FELLOW-DISCIPLES

After the death of Kesavchandra Sen serious differences about doctrinal and ecclesiastical matters broke out among his disciples and divided them into several opposed parties. The chief questions that divided them were succession to the office of the chief minister, the mode of conducting public service, the trust-deed of the Mandir, and the authority of the Apostolic Darbar or Missionary Conference. Mr. Mazumdar found himself, most unwillingly perhaps, at the head of one of these parties. As the ablest of his fellow-disciples, he might perhaps expect, and the public seemed clearly to expect, that he would be recognised as the rightful successor to the leadership of his church, but the party chiefly opposed to him, 'the Darbar party,' not only did not give him the expected recognition, but actually resolved to keep the Brahma Mandir pulpit vacant as a mark of their perpetual relation with their departed master. Mr. Mazumdar regarded and publicly represented this as the setting up of a fetish in a theistic temple, and long refused to preach there. We need not however enter into the details of these divisions, as the general public are not likely to feel any interest in them. Suffice it to say that Mr. Mazumdar felt himself misunderstood, unappreciated, distrusted and persecuted by his colleagues, more or less, during the whole time that intervened between

Kesav's death and his own, and that his usefulness suffered much from these causes. He however had a number of faithful followers with whom he prayed while he stopped in Calcutta, and who helped him in carrying on his work according to his own ideas. It may be added that he at last felt the need of some sort of constitution for his Church and tried to secure it. But he was not successful in his attempts, and up to this time the more thoughtful among his followers are trying, with very indifferent success, to bring some order out of the chaos and anarchy into which the affairs of the New Dispensation body has fallen. The seeds of autocracy have been too long and too thickly sown by the leaders to allow of a constitutional and representative form of church government being established without long-continued persevering and perhaps violent efforts on the part of those who wish it.

OTHER WRITINGS

Soon after Kesav's death Mr. Mazumdar wrote an excellent biography of him. It did not quite please his fellow-disciples, some of whom wrote, in collaboration, a lengthy life of their leader in Bengali. But the general public will find in Mr. Mazumdar's book a faithful account of the great Brahma leader's life and teachings. One great merit of the book is its impartiality and absence of strong bias, a merit which could hardly be expected in a biography written by an ardent follower and admirer. Mr. Mazumdar also wrote in the years following *Aids to Moral Character*

for young people, and *Stri-Charitra-Sangathan* in Bengali for women. While in America during his third visit to the West, Mr. Mazumdar published his *Heart-beats*, which has already been referred to, and shortly after came his *Spirit of God*. The former is a collection of short paragraphs containing reflections on religious and other matters and embodying spiritual experiences. "To me," says Dr. Barrows, "the book seems the most remarkable devotional book since that of Thomas a Kempis." *The Spirit of God* is written in Mr. Mazumdar's best style and may be said to be the most important of his works. Its object is to show the presence and activity of God in all departments of life and nature. But the exposition follows no fixed method or system. The appeal is not to the intellect, but to spiritual or rather devotional experience. The book will not therefore convince the doubting or the unbelieving. Those also, who would seek in it anything like an appreciation or criticism of ancient or modern systems of philosophical thought, would be disappointed. Mr. Mazumdar, as we have already seen, has no faith in Philosophy, and we may add, he does not show in his works any acquaintance with philosophical systems. He uses the term 'Philosophy' now and then in a loose sense, sometimes in the sense of spiritual wisdom and sometimes in a quite opposite sense, namely the conclusions of scientists or rather physicists. However, though not calculated to satisfy the sceptical, the book will surely confirm

and uplift the faithful. It is remarkable that throughout this book Mr. Mazumdar evinces a deep appreciation of Hindu modes of spiritual culture, but he seems rather afraid of the Vedantic doctrine of unity and tries to avoid it. In some of his moods and expressions, however, he goes very near it and seems to accept it. Perhaps this halting and hesitating manner would be impossible if he had the patience or inclination to examine the philosophical grounds of the unity of consciousness, a doctrine common to both higher Hinduism and higher Christianity. When one is convinced of the metaphysical *necessity*, the unavoidableness, of Monism in its fundamental form, one ceases to fight shy of it and only tries to reconcile with it as best he can the differences implied in devotional and practical religion. With Mr. Mazumdar's often expressed distrust of Philosophy, one could not expect him to be of an even and settled mind as to the philosophical doctrine of unity, though it is really the key to all higher experiences in religion as distinguished from the forms and expressions of popular religious sentiment. However, we give below a few extracts from Mr. Mazumdar's valuable book. In the following extract he distinguishes the conceptions of Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavat, apparently following the teachings of the Vaishnava leaders of the Bengal School.

The fact is that no species of doctrine about the nature and immanence of the Spirit is unknown to one or other of the various orders of Hinduism. The very multitude of the

doctrines perplexes the believer. In trying to simplify them, one finds that three forces of the Divine nature have, according to Hindu wisdom, entered into the formation of all things. The first is the force whereby God holds his own being and gives being to others; the second is the force by which he has intelligence and gives intelligence to others. The first is existence, the second is reason, the third is joy. The first means the reality of being, or creation; the second is the reality of intelligence in all things made; the third is the reality of love or joy, which to Hindu thinkers means one and the same thing. The three best known names of God, familiar to all who know anything of Hinduism, correspond to this spiritual analysis. The first name is Brahman, the second is Paramatman, and the third is Bhagavan. Brahman means "He who is great and makes what is great;" Paramatman means the Supreme Spirit, from whom all intelligent beings have sprung, and who dwells in them: the third is Bhagavan, which means "He to whom belong all the resources, all the forces, all the wealth of all the worlds, and who incarnates himself in all great men." Now, no possible conception of the Divine nature, ancient or modern, Eastern or Western, is possible beyond this threefold principle. The closest parallel between the Christian and Hindu conceptions of the threefold nature of God is here observable. The only difference is that in the Hindu evolution the Spirit occupies the second and in the Christian system it occupies the third place in the self-revelation of God's nature. The Vedas deal with that self-revelation as manifested in natural laws and objects, the Upanishads deal with the soul and intelligence of man, and the Puranas deal with incarnation and the dealings of God with mankind. We have not the remotest wish to compare the Hindu and Christian Scriptures; but generally speaking, the old Testament corresponds to the Vedas, the gospels to the Puranas and the Epistles of Saint Paul to the Upanishads. But Christianity in the Old and New Testaments has mainly the dispensation of the Father and the Dispensation of the Son, scarcely anything that can be called the dispensation of the Spirit. When the last finds adequate record, the analogy between the Hindu and Christian schemes will become complete.

The following on "God is Love" will be delightful and edifying to all :—

Undoubtedly this is true, What we mean by love in its highest sense is nothing but himself. As love he is seen in various relations of life. The calm tranquil relations that form the ground-work of society, and bind all classes of men,—the rich to the poor and the poor to each other—are permea-

ted by an unobtrusive love whose tides ebb and flow as they stand closer or further apart. But the courtesies, the common obligations of life, the respect that every man owes to his neighbour, the mutual dutifulness which is the bond of all organised society, are sweetened and cemented by an underflow of feeling easy to recognise as the love of man for man. When that feeling is not there, these social observances become hard, insincere, hypocritical, to not a few positively disgusting. When there is that feeling, a morning bow has the balm of morning breeze, and the commonest civility becomes an acceptable worship. The love of man for man is the outcome of the love of God for man. The kindness of a glance, the pressure of a hand, an inquiry in illness, an acknowledgment of a favour,—all become instinct with an influence and a mysterious force. There is a secret divinity in it all. The genuine love of man is almost as sacred as the love of God, oftentimes harder to practise,—surely the stepping stone to that higher love. The love of God is the best teacher of the service of the social order. The inspiration of domestic tenderness, of public duty, patriotism, and philanthropy, is the love of God. No one goes through the common usages of life more pleasantly than he who is familiar with the ways of the Spirit. God abides among us as the tranquil kindness of social and household life. If all these pleasant manners are not assumed, we are good to each other because the love of goodness, the love of God, besets us unknown to ourselves. The exquisite relations of refined society bring this undercurrent of affectionateness into a higher and more prominent order. There is a wholesome shyness in us all which does not permit it to be confessed that men, if they are not deliberately wicked or cruel, love each other in the commonest intercourse. The introduction matures into acquaintance, the acquaintance into intimacy, the intimacy into friendship, and there is no limit how far man can be friend to man. The capacity of human love is simply infinite. Our intellect halts, our will fails, our love grasps everything. But if it goes no further than the stage of acquaintance, there is a calmness of mutual regard in it which, though somewhat distant, is not without its counterpart in spiritual culture.

We add one more extract, and that is on "Reunion in Heaven."

Love never dies. When our beloved are lost we love them all the more; and we feel we have their love wherever and in whatsoever state they abide. The higher and purer our nature, the more immortal our love. We are more tender and reverent to the dead than to the living. And, if we love those whom we have lost, shall we lose those whom we love? If this love be from

God, not from our selfishness or worldliness, it carries the proof of its own immortality. It would be the cruellest delusion to our hearts and consciences if this were not so, if the highest love and craving for union missed their objects. We heartily believe in mutual recognition and reunion in heaven. Heaven would be no heaven without our dear ones. But how are we to be reunited? Not certainly in the lower relations of the flesh and the world, but in the higher relations of spiritual nature. Reunion means recognition. It means spiritual recognition. When they are alive, did we recognise—if they live now, do we recognise—their spiritual nature? When we do not recognise our dear ones here, we shall not know them elsewhere. It is not the carnal life, the carnal mind, the earthly union, or, at best, mental peculiarities, that make all the relations between ourselves and the objects of our love. Surely, much of that union dissolves when life dissolves; and with that dissolution goes also the possibility of recognising them in the state in which the spiritual nature is all in all. So long, therefore, as life lasts, the unceasing effort of the believers in immortality should be to recognise each other's spiritual nature, and make that the object of the highest and tenderest regard. For those who have no recognition of the spirit here, under so many favourable conditions, cannot expect to recognise each other in the strange land where bodily relations and earthly features disappear. And, without recognition how is union possible? Heaven will be no heaven to you, but a veritable hell, if, while on earth, you have failed to recognise the spiritual claims, and made yourself unfit to meet them. The immortals will not be your friends, but seem like enemies, if you neglect to be ruled in your conduct of life by them while here; your beloved in Paradise are not what you imagine: with your selfishness, vanity, impure-mindedness, you will never feel at home with them if you do not try to be like them. It is only when you have lived up to the holiest rules of life, lived as an absolute sacrifice to God, that you can meet your God on that awful day. Learn to live as an immortal, know your dear ones and treat them as immortals, satisfy the demands of the good and true who have gone before, if you pray for reunion.

LAST DAYS AND LAST WORK

In the last years of his life Mr. Mazumdar put his hand to a very useful work,—the foundation, with the help of others, of an institution for the higher training of young men. It is now called the University Institute and is housed in a fine

building in College Square, Calcutta, which would have been a great joy to him if he had lived to see it. He was for several years a President of the Institution and delivered several addresses in connection with its Moral Section. During his very last days one of his fondest cares was to carry through the press a volume of reflections, prayers and autobiographical sketches in Bengali under the name of *Ashish* (blessings). It is said that when this book, just out of the press, was brought to him only a few days before his death, he silently and devoutly placed it upon his head. We also may place it on our heads as the last legacy of our revered countryman to us. The book is of great value, as embodying the last thoughts and experiences of the great thinker and devotee. We give below, in English translation, a paragraph in which he clearly expresses for the first time in his life his belief in pre-existence:—

44:—*Pre-existence*:—O Inner Self, tell me why it happens to me again and again that I am obliged to think that before coming to this world I was with thee somewhere, in some form; and again why it is that it is only in the highest and best moments of life, and not at any other moment, that I have this consciousness? It seems as if some half-revealed recollection, some piece of self-knowledge hidden in the soul, comes out suddenly before the mind and soon disappears. I often think it to be a fancy and a delusion and for the moment cease to think of it; but again during moments of deep communion with thee, it appears again and I cannot resist it. I did not learn it from the *Bhagavadgita*, neither from Wordsworth's or Tennyson's poems, nor from the Gospel of John. I indeed get a confirmation of this feeling from these writers, but it rises in my mind independently and disappears in the same manner. O Blissful One, who knowest the inmost parts of my being! I do not know whether I existed apart from thee or in unity with thee; it seems I existed in unity and yet in difference. As a ray in a radiant orb, as form in the sea, one

and yet different, so I seem to have existed in thee.—I cannot exactly say, and I do not wish to say, for it does not seem to be capable of being expressed. I am afraid lest in the act of expressing it this consciousness should get dimmed. Thou art ever perfect and I am imperfect. Thou art my support, and I am supported by thee. Thou art my Father and I am thy son bowing down under thy feet. Thou Consciousness and Bliss, I am forced to believe that I existed and do exist in thee in some shape. What was dim and unexpressed before, has become clear and known through the various troubles and trials of life. I do not know what other devotees think, but it is a great blessing to me, for it removes all my doubts about immortality. If I existed before, I shall exist after also—the body seems only a temporary habitation, only an instrument for spiritual culture. This thought leads me to wish to live, as much as possible, independently of the body, it makes the future life clear; past, present and future seem parts of an undivided life; the special preparations for the future life are not suspended; a great ardour for those preparations is rather kindled in the heart. Much hast thou taught me, teach me more, teach me more.

Mr. Mazumdar died on the 27th May, 1905, of diabetes, from which he had long been suffering. His body was followed to the crematorium by a large number of his friends and admirers, including some leaders of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. The procession made a halt once before the Brahma Mandir of India and again before the Sadharan Brahma Samaj Mandir. At the latter place several ladies came out from the adjoining Brahma houses and paid their respects to the last remains of the great leader and preacher. Mr. Mazumdar was childless. But his admirers are many and they meet every year on the anniversary of his death to honour his memory.

Sasipada Banerji

INTRODUCTION

IN one of his notes, Sasipada Banerji writes of himself thus:—"My life has been a great romance, more so than what any human imagination can create. It is the play of His fingers on the harp of time," Mr. Banerji has rendered much useful service to his country and in many directions, and that too, amidst trying circumstances. Indeed his career is so exemplary that young Indians aspiring to do real, substantial social work cannot do better than emulate the life and life-work of this worthy son of India.

LIFE AND CAREER

Banerji was born in the year 1840 of a Kulin Brahman family at Baranagar (the suburb of Calcutta). He was the third son of Rajkumar Banerji, a public-spirited man of the place, one of the founders of the first English School there. Rajkumar Master, by that name he was known in his days, died when Sasipada was only five years old. He was brought up by his mother, a woman of strong common-sense, though without the advantages of what we understand as education in these days. She died of cholera in the year 1863. Banerji went through the usual Pathsala and High School courses, but on account of

the straitened circumstances of the family, had to leave his school before passing the Matriculation Examination. He was married at the age of twenty—a late age for those times and for one belonging to his high caste. On the death of his first wife, he married an educated widow. By his first wife, he had five sons. For years, Banerji served as a teacher in the Salkia School. Till the year 1870 he was a man of limited means struggling with difficulties. Then he obtained a Government post and had a large income. For the manifold services rendered by Banerji the Pandits of Bhatpara decorated him with the title of Sevabrata. In 1868 the Government appointed him an Honorary Magistrate and an Honorary Secretary of the Municipal Board. On the eve of his departure for England in 1871, the inhabitants of Baranagar and the adjoining villages presented him with an address in which they recounted all the self-sacrificing labours performed by him for their good. On the 16th August 1871 Degrees of the Order of Good-Templars were conferred on him at Birmingham for the work he had done so far in the cause of the Temperance Movement in India. Although honoured in this way, Banerji never felt elated, because he did not care for worldly honours as such. They were to him an additional incentive to continuous good work. Throughout his life he found supreme satisfaction only in the honest performance of life's sacred duties. In 1877, on the occasion of the Royal Proclamation' (1st January

1877) of the assumption by Her Majesty Queen Victoria, of the title of Empress of India, the Government presented Banerji a Certificate of Honour "in recognition of his services rendered to the public in connection with various benevolent projects."

I.—SOCIAL REFORM

Baranagar, the birth-place of Banerji, is a native manufacturing town and a seat of European factories. It has several mills and workshops; and as such, forms the residence of a very large number of working classes. Naturally, therefore, Banerji found out his sphere of philanthropic work first among these people. On the 1st of November 1866, he established there a night school for the benefit of these people, and after a time succeeded in starting its branches at some of the neighbouring places. He also started a Middle Vernacular School for them near Serampur. In 1870 the old Temperance Society was closed and it was converted into a "Working men's Club"—the first of its kind in India. Total abstinence was laid down as an absolute condition for its membership. A small library was attached to this club. The members were given the benefit of addresses of a moral and practical nature by sympathetic visitors of the club. Banerji himself gave useful discourses in this club. It held its meetings at the houses of its members; and thus the members' wives, mothers and sisters were made to take interest in them. Many of the members joined the Sadharan Dharma Sabha,

(Universal Religious Association) started by Banerji in 1873. For the benefit of the female members of the working classes, Banerji convened meetings at his own house, where he gave lantern-lectures and entertained the workers in different ways. He took the working classes for several excursions, one of which was organized so splendidly that even the attention of Her Majesty, the late Queen Victoria was drawn to the same. This club advised its members to put a stop to strikes as far as possible. The members were exhorted to work and look to the interest of their masters; and at the same time, to present their grievances to their employers in a proper way. The members were entertained by means of lantern-lectures, exhibitions of pictures and musical and singing parties. They were taught the value of thrift and self-help. Consequently several of them were able out of their savings to carry on cloth business on a small scale, and several others wove cloth on Sundays and other holidays. In 1889 at the 23rd annual distribution of prizes to the schools in connection with this club the President of the meeting, Mr. G. B. Croll, of the Baranagar Jute Mills bore open testimony to Banerji's work by saying that the men and the boys who received tuition in Banerji's schools were a far better lot than others who did not do so. Banerji even started an "Anna Savings Bank" for receiving the deposits of his poor friends, at a time when there was no Post Office Savings-Bank. Later on, he

persuaded the Government to open a Savings Bank in Baranagar, just as they had done in district headquarters and their sub-divisions. In 1874 he started a monthly paper of purely educational interest. This illustrated Bengali paper of 8 pages was called *Bharat Sramajibi* (*Indian Workman*). It was published with the object of improving the moral and intellectual condition of the working classes. 15,000 copies of the paper were printed, a very large number for those days and each was sold for one pice. Banerji also helped the cause of these classes in his weekly paper called the *Baranagar Samachar*. His work was not confined only to Hindu working classes. In 1872 he established a school for Mahomedan boys of the working classes. But besides this work for the Baranagar people, Banerji did something for the people of Calcutta too. He opened two night schools there, one at the City College and the other at the Keshub Academy. He also established two Day Pathshalas for the children of the working classes. In all these schools, he had arranged that the pupils should be instructed in their subjects quickly and intelligently. This step, he thought, was quite essential, for the class of people, for whose benefit the schools were started, were not in a position to spare as much time as ordinary people could do, for the purposes of education. In 1866 Banerji started a society called "The Social Improvement Society" and reared it with his usual indefatigable energy. It did useful work in literary and educa-

tional lines. It also helped the people in general matters. In this society useful lectures were delivered. It assisted the local vernacular school and girls' schools. It co-operated with the Magistrate of the Twenty-four Parganas, and the Municipal Committee. It did all this useful work in spite of its very limited annual income. Banerji was the soul of this society. Owing to his advanced views on social and religious matters the progress of the society was much retarded; this was so only during the time that Banerji was not its secretary. The enemies of Banerji ultimately saw their mistake and henceforward treated Banerji fairly. During Banerji's visit to England, he read at Leeds, before the Education Section of the Social Science Association, a paper strongly advocating the introduction of a Factory Act in India. To value his services for the working classes truly, suffice it to mention that the members of the Workingmen's Club openly testified in the public address they presented to Banerji, on the eve of his departure for England, to the valuable influence exercised on them by their Club and by the personal work of its founder whom they styled in the address as "our father." In the city of Bristol, on the 31st of October 1871, the Lewin's Mead Domestic Mission presented to Banerji, a handsomely bound Bible and gave him a welcome address in which they appreciated his most valuable services for the Indian working classes.

One's appreciation of Banerji's work is enhanced, when one remembers that he started to do this kind of social service, at a time when he himself struggled for bread. Moreover he was a high-caste Brahman, between whom and the working classes a great gulf had existed. Banerji was a total abstainer himself. His way of life, being thoroughly simple and religious, he was able to exert his influence upon them all the better. We have also to note that his work for the elevation of the depressed classes, was undertaken long before any such idea dawned upon the minds of the people in the country and when the stronghold of orthodoxy was quite powerful to withstand all the attacks levelled against it.

When the Depressed Classes Mission was started in and around Bombay, Banerji helped it with a donation of Rs. 200, thus testifying his keen appreciation of this noble type of service to the down-trodden classes of a province different from his own. For his Baranagar work Banerji has left some money in the hands of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj as a permanent fund for the propagation of practical religion and morality among the working people.

2.—EMANCIPATION OF HINDU WOMEN

Having received the benefit of English education, Banerji's views on many questions of religion and society underwent a great transformation, and he became a very earnest and staunch reformer. In 1865 he gave up idolatry and discarded the sacred

thread. In social matters, seeing clearly that it was the caste system that prevented the national unity of India, he gave up the same : and, as we have seen before, he commenced to mix with all classes of people very freely, thoroughly believing that unless that was done it was impossible to elevate the depressed and backward classes of the Indian people. For this open heresy, all Baranagar rose up in arms against him and his wife ; "meetings were held to take steps for putting them in serious difficulties ; the barber, for instance, was forbidden to shave Banerji ; the washerman was threatened with punishment if he washed their clothes ; drinking water from the river was not to be supplied to them and even the mehtar was enjoined not to cleanse their privy." He also came to perceive that the very tardy progress of the Indian people in all matters was due to the great ignorance prevailing among the female population of his country. That ignorance, he clearly perceived, placed insuperable obstacles in the path of national advance. It was in this enlightened condition of his mind that Banerji married a young Brahman girl of his own choice from a strictly orthodox family in the year 1860. Banerji being a Kulin Brahman could have got, in this marriage transaction, a large dowry, but he declined to entertain such sordid considerations in so solemn a transaction. At this time, he was seriously thinking as to how he should prove himself of service to the country. His zeal as a reformer

had already made his position in his ancestral home quite a solitary one ; and after his marriage, it became more galling. One can vividly realize this, when one comes to know that, in the ancestral house in which Banerji was living, there lived too, all members of his family, "consisting of a large number of inmates, seven generations both by male and female lines." Banerji had married in order to find in his wife a sincere and active sympathiser, inspirer and co-worker. But to bring about this magic change in an uneducated girl brought up in a strictly orthodox family and that too, in his home, became to him a matter of extreme difficulty. The wife had to pass her life in the family house where many members were living ; and she had no desire whatever to learn. On the other hand, Banerji being an educated young man wanted his wife to share with him the benefits of education. In this crisis Banerji was obliged to wade through a regular maze of difficulties before he could realize his much cherished object. At the time when Banerji married, female education had made little or no progress. Some of the female disciples of the Chaitanya sect were well versed in religious lore ; but as that sect loosened the bonds of caste and admitted in its fold people of low caste, it lost its former influence on the higher castes of Bengal. Besides this, the widows of zemindars had learnt sufficiently to keep accounts and to manage well their zemin-

daris in all other respects. But culture as such was confined only to the courtesans. They were well-versed in the accomplishments of music, poetry and drama. The girls' schools in existence were only attended by the children of the very poorest and lowest classes. The instruction given there was merely religious and the religion taught was Christianity. The attendance of pupils was avowedly purchased. The efforts made by several societies for the progress of female education among the higher caste Hindus, supplemented by Christian Missionaries was insignificant. The people superstitiously believed that the education of females smelt of widowhood and lack of connubial fidelity. It was in this state of Bengal society, that Banerji had to carry out the uphill work of educating his own wife. The wife herself strongly opposed all the persuasions of her husband to teach her. Banerji continued to urge upon his wife the necessity of receiving education, with the result that after one year he succeeded in influencing his wife to yield to his desire. But this was not sufficient; it was only the initial triumph. Mrs. Banerji was living in the zenana apartments of the family house and in accordance with the prevailing custom of an orthodox Bengal family, the wives had no opportunity of meeting their husbands during the course of the day. This state of things went on for some time; until at last the thing became quite unbearable. He set at naught the family custom and commenced

teaching his wife in his own home during the day. This made his position a queer one ; but it made that of his wife a regular trial. She submitted to all the persecution and ridicule that was heaped upon her in consequence. She quietly proceeded with her studies, for the sake of the love she bore towards her husband. In a few months' time, she made considerable progress. This attracted his widowed sister-in-law (brother's wife) and she too became Banerji's pupil. After a short time she too considerably advanced, and then his cousin and her widowed daughter Kusum Kumari joined. The other members of the family saw the result with their own eyes. The paternal home became gradually a place where both the unmarried girls and the elderly married women along with the widows, commenced to taste the fruits of education. The class of girls was taken up by Mrs. Banerji and the class of elderly ladies was conducted by Banerji himself. Ultimately Banerji started a girls' school at his native town of Baranagar for the benefit of his family and also for the good of the neighbouring families. This school was started in 1865 and was under the charge of a pandit and was mainly supported by Banerji himself. It continued its progress for some time ; but a crisis came when Banerji openly joined the faith of the Brahmos. The Pandit was instigated to resign. The parents of the girls were persuaded not to send their daughters to Banerji's school. To crown all, even the landlady caused

Banerji to vacate the school-premises. These difficulties could not subdue the pertinacity of purpose in Banerji. He secured another teacher at once; hired a new place on a lease of one year and continued the school for some time, with only one pupil to study in it. He then had recourse to the system of every day giving dolls and other prizes to the pupils who attended his school; he even gave a sort of commission to the maid-servant in charge of the school-premises for every new pupil brought to the school by her influence. With these methods he succeeded in overcoming all obstacles; and in the year 1866, when a prize distribution gathering was held under the presidentship of Prof. Lobb, the school had on its roll 57 pupils. It was the same school that was honoured by a visit from Sir Richard Temple, the Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal in 1876 when His Honour was presented an address signed by all the leading and respectable inhabitants of Baranagar. Even the Royal Family of England honoured the school in as much as Princess Alice and her sister the Crown Princess of Prussia once sent a number of portraits and other presents to Banerji's school to show their sympathy with the cause of female education among the Hindus.

The open avowal of the Brahmo faith on the part of Banerji, also came in the way of the zenana class conducted by him for the benefit of the elderly women of his family. All of them left him. Banerji was then obliged to leave his family-house (1866).

Henceforth he was free to introduce any changes that he thought necessary to turn his residence into a home of refinement and culture. He felt keenly the damping influence that the zenana system exercised on the health and character of women. He determined to break it as he believed that the study of nature and life was an indispensable and important aid to mental culture more even than mere book-learning. On the 23rd January 1866 he and his wife were present at the Adi Samaj Prayer Hall on the occasion of the 36th Anniversary of the Brahmo Samaj. In the winter of 1866-67 he and his wife attended a public meeting held in honour of Miss. Mary Carpenter. In 1868 both of them visited Sir J. B. and Lady Phear, and on their way back visited the Chitpur Hospital. These were bold steps. To the orthodox party in Bengal, a visit to an English family with one's wife and a Hindu lady visiting a public institution were revolting acts. This appears from the fact, that in 1868 a political satire was written about this incident in the columns of the *Hindu Patriot*. Mrs. Banerji was the first Hindu lady to visit a public institution.

In his new home, Banerji commenced in right earnest the work of helping and educating widows. In 1867 he established a Female Circulating Library for the benefit of women of the higher castes. This library was ultimately amalgamated with the Public Library of Baranagar which Banerji established. He worked most enthusiastically on the committee-

appointed by Miss. Carpenter in Calcutta for taking proper measures to ensure a permanent supply of female teachers. Unfortunately this committee did not achieve its end as both Keshab Chunder Sen and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar opposed it tooth and nail, on the ground that the Government was not the proper authority to take up this work. In 1871 Banerji started another girls' school at Kutighata (South Baranagar). In the same year he and his wife sailed for England—his wife being the first Hindu lady to do so. On their return, Banerji was offered the post of a Deputy Magistrate but he declined it, as its acceptance would have involved the severing of his connection with several philanthropic activities in his native town of Baranagar. In 1873 a school called "Hindu Mohila Vidyalaya" was started at Ballygunge near Calcutta. This was the beginning of the movement for the higher education of grown-up women in the Hindu community. Banerji was the most active member of the committee of this school.

In 1876 the Bengal Branch of the National Indian Association was opened by Sir Richard Temple and Banerji was appointed its corresponding secretary. He was the chief worker of this Branch.

Banerji founded a Bengali journal called the "Antahpur" for the benefit of Bengali women. It has since been discontinued. Its peculiar feature was that it was written exclusively by ladies. It was

edited successively by Banerji's able daughters Ushabala and Banalata, both of whom pre-deceased their father.

Banerji's social services consisted, besides these, in the most active part he took in befriending the cause of the poor Hindu widows, who had to conform against their faith and inclination to the austerities imposed upon them by orthodoxy. We shall see how he came to make the widow's cause his own.

When Banerji was a boy of eight or nine, he witnessed the inhuman torture of a young Hindu widow of his house that had gone astray, by her relatives. The torture resulted in the suicide of the widow. This incident made a keen and lasting impression on the plastic mind of the young boy. It was this barbarous conduct that stirred Banerji's heart and won him on the side of reform. "Who knows how many unfortunate widows have suffered the same fate in Hindu homes?" was the thought that kept on haunting his mind. He henceforward resolved to do all he could to improve the condition of Hindu widows. Even when he was fifteen years old, his heart greatly rejoiced when he heard that the Widow Marriage Act was passed into law.

After he had left his ancestral house, he built one for himself at Baranagar. There his cousin sister Bidhumukhi and her widowed daughter Kusum Kumari came to live with him. Kusum was married at the early age of five and she became a

widow a year after. Both the mother and daughter were educated by Banerji and they came to feel the terrible position of widows in Hindu society. In 1868 Banerji brought about the re-marriage of Kusum with Babu Chandranath Chaudhri, by their mutual consent, and after the death of the first wife of Chandranath. Chandranath was an educated, well-to-do young man of the age of 26; and Kusum was at that time fifteen years old. This was a "pratilom" marriage, as the bride was of Brahman family and the bridegroom was by caste a Sadgop, a caste corresponding to the ancient Vaisya caste, but lower than the three castes of Brahman, the Vaidya, and the Kayastha. The persecution which Banerji had to undergo, while bringing about this marriage, was simply tremendous. On one occasion, after his sister and her daughter had come to live in his new house, his relatives, taking advantage of Banerji's absence from his home for some work in his school, forcibly removed the two ladies from their residence, locked them up in a separate room of the family-house, and treated them as prisoners. At this time Banerji had no servant who could give him the information about this. The members of Banerji's orthodox family consulted competent Hindu authorities, and these opined that Chandrayana (shaving of the head), and Prayschitta (atoning ceremony) would not suffice for the sins committed by these ladies of having lived for three nights in a Brahmo's home and of having taken their meals with

him. As a punishment they should be banished from the house and made to live for some years in a holy place for the expiation of their sins. They were, therefore, secretly dispatched to Benares, from which place, after many hardships, Banerji, after an interval of two to three months, brought them back to his own home in Calcutta. He then began work to bring about the re-marriage of his widowed niece. He experienced great difficulties in securing a proper place for the celebration of the marriage. A millionaire offered his house for the purpose; but on the last day he backed out. Banerji was therefore obliged to hire a house for the whole month; and at that place, the marriage was celebrated, one week after the date originally annouced for the purpose. His sufferings did not yet come to an end. On the day of the marriage, the people of Baranagar gathered round the house and disturbed the proceedings by a shower of stones. Fortunately, with the assistaace of the police, serious results were averted. By this boldest act of his life, Banerji offended his whole native town. "He was abused by the men, cursed by the women, ridiculed by the frivolous, reviled by the violent, and hated by all." He received anonymous letters containing the foulest abuses and the grossest libels against himself and his family. Letters were sent even to his English friends in order to lower his influence with them. The Baranagar people tried their best to expel him from the Social Improvement Society which he

founded and advanced so well by his able management. Having failed in this move, they removed him from the secretaryship of that society with the result that the society suffered considerably. Even the Magistrate and Collector of the Twenty-four Parganas was petitioned to remove Banerji from the Municipal Board of the town of which he was the honorary secretary; but there too, his enemies did not succeed as the Magistrate knew well the worth and work of Banerji. "The windows of his Baranagar house were broken, the doors were removed, and the whole house presented the woeful appearance of the scene of some violent proceedings." But Banerji was not the man to be cowed down by any amount of persecution. He stood manfully to his guns. Throughout this period of trial, he never neglected his duties towards his church, the local Brahmo Samaj of which he was the founder and minister, and towards the philanthropic activities started by him at Baranagar. He continued to discharge his duties single-minded, and single-handed, with an intensity of purpose so unshakeable that his enemies saw their mistake at last, and reinstated him in the management of all his institutions. No sooner was this done, than the moribund institutions commenced to revive under his inspiring guidance and the activities followed their normal course.

Banerji did not rest with the marriage of his widow-niece. He continued his zealous work by befriending another widow living in his neighbour-

hood. Though he was poor he received this widow in his own house ; and brought about her re-marriage. For this Banerji had to suffer much more than he did formerly. At this time he was editing a journal in which he was constantly and fearlessly exposing the hypocritical life of many of the Baranagar people who posed before the public as saviours of society. This fearless exposure brought him into trouble. One of the hypocrites prosecuted Banerji for defamation. Banerji was sentenced to suffer imprisonment for three months and to pay a fine of Rs. 500. This was afterwards reduced to a fine of Rs. 150, the sentence of imprisonment being set aside in the appeal. Throughout these proceedings, Banerji showed a perfectly gentlemanly conduct. In his journal, he frankly avowed his fault and published an apology. For this honourable conduct Sir John Phear, one of Banerji's staunchest friends and supporters, paid the whole amount of the fine himself. Banerji not only helped several widows of his native town to re-marry but he also gave shelter to and arranged the re-marriage of no fewer than thirty-five other widows of respectable families. In fact, ever since the re-marriage of his niece, his home became a refuge for many a helpless and destitute widow, " a miniature Widows' Home," so to speak, long before he had made any organized efforts to establish one.

Besides the help thus rendered to particular widows, Banerji, on the death of his first wife, in the year 1877 married a widow himself by way of



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setting a practical example. He kept up for many years an agitation in the country in favour of the cause of widow-remarriage, through the distribution of pamphlets and leaflets and by means of writing articles in different periodicals. But foremost of all, by his sincere selfless service in this direction, and by his personal example, he was instrumental in firing the enthusiasm of many a young man of his town.

No doubt Banerji was not a pioneer but a follower of Keshab Chandra Sen and Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, in this line of his activity. But one can sufficiently gather that Banerji's services for alleviating the miserable condition of Bengali widows, were really marvellous. As Miss Carpenter said in one of her letters to him, Banerji "discovered what noble spirits exist in the weaker sex, which in India is crushed and debarred from the exercise of the powers conferred on it by the Almighty Father."

But Banerji was a pioneer in the cause of the education of Hindu widows. It has already been pointed out how this effort took shape in the year 1864 when Banerji opened a little school in his family house at Baranagar for grown up widows and other ladies. The Widows' Home offered them a chance of being trained as female teachers, a want long felt in the Hindu Society. In this Home, poor and helpless widows got food, clothing and education, free of charge. Most unfortunately this Home had to be closed owing to Banerji's old age: but not before Banerji and the

Government had tried their best to secure a suitable successor to him. No institution or individual was found ready to take up the work. Even the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was approached. But it declined to turn it on orthodox lines. Banerji had trained his cultured daughter Banalata to take up this work. She helped her father so long as she lived ; but she pre-deceased her father. Banerji was therefore helpless, and was consequently obliged to close, once for all, the doors of his dear institution. However, the very founding of such a Home, and the model lines on which it was conducted, did influence the starting of Widows' Homes like Pandita Ramabai's Sarada Sadan, Karve's Home and others of a similar nature in Mysore and other places.* Even in Bombay, the founders of the Surat Vanita Vishrama have been able to found an Ashrama for the benefit of Gujarati Hindu widows. And the Bombay Presidency Social Reform Association has also exerted itself in the same direction. This shows that the beneficent influence of Banerji's work is still living in different parts of our country.

3—TEMPERANCE WORK

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, drunkenness in Bengal was more prevalent and obtrusive than it is to-day. To cure this evil, several prominent Indians and Englishmen like

* Broad and extensive has been his sympathy for we find that when Karve's Home was established in Bombay, Banerji sent a donation of Rs. 500 which is held there as a permanent fund for the widows.

Keshab Chandra Sen, Pyari Charan Sarkar, Rev. Dall, Rev. Paine and others worked very zealously. Banerji too joined this noble band of workers. Perceiving the bad effects caused by drink on his native town he established on the 27th March 1864, a Temperance Society at Baranagar. This was one of the oldest Temperance organizations of India. After a short time Banerji was appointed its Honorary Secretary and as such, he took very keen interest in its welfare. But like other workers in the field of temperance reform, he did not rest content with mere preaching and writing. He deemed it essential that in this kind of work as in others, personal work—work by persons on persons was essential, if the work had to produce tangible results. Banerji was eminently suited by his nature and personal habits to do this kind of work. He was himself a total abstainer. He did not take any intoxicating drug. Once when he was advised medically to take opium, he declined to do so saying “No, Doctor, I cannot die an opium eater.” He was in the habit of smoking “hukka”; but gave it up at the age of 25 when he was taunted by a friend of the patient whom he had visited. He refrained also from providing wine to others. He declined to lease the date trees of his orchard as he knew full well that the trees would be used for the manufacture of toddy. Thus fortified by his pure habits, he did personal work among the people addicted to drink. He visited individual drunkards

both in their own homes and in their drinking clubs when the same were in full swing. There he held friendly conversations with them in order to reclaim them from their vicious habits. He delivered sermons to the people addicted to the drink habit. He caused essays to be written on the evils of drink, and rewarded the successful competitors with suitable prizes. During the first year of the existence of this society, Banerji succeeded in rescuing upwards of twenty young men from intemperance and vice by his rare influence. These rescued persons in their turn commenced to help Banerji in several of his philanthropic activities. He used his influence in breaking up a drinking club and converted it into a reading club. This was joined by several persons rescued by Banerji. At all the meetings of the society, Banerji offered prayers before the commencement of its work. Meetings of this society were frequently disturbed by drunkards and wine-sellers. Banerji too was personally attacked from all sides. Taunts and abuses were the rewards he earned from those whom he wanted to improve. Attempts were made to sully his reputation by libellous reports. His enemies tried to put him to all sorts of trouble. Once Banerji objected to return home in a boat hired by him and others, because he saw there in a basket full of wine bottles. This resulted in Banerji's being forced to spend one night under Police surveillance. He was charged by the wine merchant for the abduction of his man; but next day, the man being produced, the case was dismissed and he and

his colleagues were released. This is but one out of many incidents in his life when he had shown high sense of duty even when harassed. Banerji was not a man of the stuff of which cowards are made. He went on doing his humanitarian work with great vigour. He organised a "Band of Hope"—a union of boys pledged to temperance principles. He established, in connection with the Temperance Society, a Temperance Library, the expenses of which were mostly borne by him and circulated books and pamphlets therefrom among those likely to benefit by their perusal. Banerji delivered lectures on Temperance in the night school established by himself. In 1870 this Temperance Society changed into a Working Men's Club. When Banerji went to England he was warmly welcomed at all the towns he visited. There too, he gave temperance lectures and received addresses showing Englishmen's sympathy towards such work. There he joined the Good Templars body and was initiated as a member of the Order at the Day Star Lodge, Bristol, on 14th July, 1871. At Baranagar he reclaimed hundreds from the paths of intemperance and vice.

4—MISCELLANEOUS SOCIAL SERVICE

MUNICIPAL SANITARY REFORMS.— In 1864 his first child died in consequence of the bad sanitary condition of the lying-in-rooms of those times. After experiencing some difficulty, Banerji effected a salutary reform in this line, and he was followed by many others in his province. In 1869 he was appoint-

ed an Honorary Secretary of the Municipal Board of Baranagar. As such, he worked hard to bring about many salutary reforms. He helped in the construction of roads where there were none, in improving those which were impassable, in constructing culverts and in providing for the drainage of the town. He was thus the foremost reformer in bringing about municipal improvements which improved the condition of Baranagar and the adjoining places.

RELIEF WORK.—In 1866 when there was a terrible famine Banerji helped many a destitute. He deprived himself and his wife of their food and gave it to the women. In 1867 when a terrible cyclone created havoc in Bengal, Banerji, with his noble band of workers, came forward to help the needy, sought relief from Government and distributed charity at the doors of the suffering poor. In 1870, when cholera raged in Bengal, he gave free medicine and diet. In 1872 he established the North Suburban Association for charitable relief to the able-bodied but destitute, to the helpless sick, to widows and orphans, to the aid of burning or burying dead bodies and in finding out other worthy objects of charity. This Association did much practical good. In 1893 he established the Atmiya Sabha, and through it got many poor Brahmo boys admitted free into Keshub Academy.

SOCIAL SERVICE IN HIS HOME AND IN EDUCATIONAL MATTERS.—In 1866 Banerji established a Vernacular School for boys at Baranagar. In 1872

he opened an exhibition there, mainly for the education of the local population. He rendered valuable services as a member of the Committee of Public Education. After his return from England, he opened an infant school on the Kindergarten principle. He gave his sons the highest University education. Believing University education to be unsuitable, especially in the case of girls, he carefully taught his daughters to become good house-wives, gave them a general knowledge of the English language to enable them to read easy books on useful subjects and a special knowledge of their mother-tongue to enable them to mould it well, both for speaking and writing. He encouraged literary efforts in his daughters. Banerji made these efforts for the education of his sons and daughters that they might devote their energy to the service of their motherland, according to the powers God had given them, and the education they had received. Besides these efforts to educate his children, he took special care to mould their lives on noble patterns. Vulgarity, anger, chastisement, luxury, and finery were unknown in his home. On the contrary, there reigned sweetness, pleasantness simplicity and comfort. His home atmosphere was pervaded by the spirit of a living faith. All, including menials, were addressed in a respectable way. He gave rewards to his children for special acts of merit. Every child was given pocket-money and was taught how to spend it worthily. Even the proper use of money

received rewards in kind. Thus, side by side with his social service for outsiders, he did social service for his own home as well. Many reformers neglect their homes; and thus when their children turn out to be bad men and women, they become themselves the laughing-stock of the people at large. Banerji carried reform on natural lines by putting into practice the adage, "Charity begins at home."

RELIGIOUS REFORM

The religious activities of Banerji are even more important than his social and humanitarian activities which are merely an expression of his deeply religious nature. True religion has always an eye to the practical.

It is wrong to think that the mere wish to do good would serve as a sufficient motive power in the lives of social servants. Such wish vanishes into thin air when persecution is severe and acute. Banerji defined religion to be taking in and drawing out, *i.e.*, loving others, both God and man, and making others love. Thus Banerji's personal religion was very catholic embracing within its wide compass, persons of all shades of religious views. Banerji's house was thronged by people of all religious denominations. He himself took part in the religious services of all kinds and sorts of people. We have seen how he joined the *Sankirtans* of the working classes. He had a wonderfully tolerant mind. It appears that his liberal faith owes its origin very likely to his belief that truth

is universal, however it may be conceived in different forms suited to different countries. The common element of all religion is a changing, ever-increasing thing, and therefore it is discerned more and more clearly as the devotees advance in their spiritual perception. Banerji was brought up in an orthodox family who firmly believed in polytheism. Yet on his twentieth birth day, he gave clear evidence of the liberal cast of his mind, when he made the family Guru change the usual mantra into a theistic one of *Anando Brahmeti* from the *Bhṛigu Valli* of the Taittiriya Upanishad. Once, on hearing a stirring religious discourse of Keshab Chandra Sen, he made up his mind to openly join the Brahmo faith. He gave up caste, idolatry and the sacred thread. By this open defiance of orthodoxy Banerji kindled the wrath not only of the members of his own family but of the whole town of Baranagar. This indignation grew into intense hatred by Banerji's religious zeal in bringing about the re-marriage of his widowed niece Kusum Kumari. Yet he never budged an inch from his own principles. He steadfastly carried out his duties in a religious spirit, until at last opposition itself died out. He reigned supreme as formerly in the hearts of his countrymen. Banerji always called himself a reformed Hindu. In his various philanthropic activities he always adhered to his religious convictions; but they being very liberal, he always utilized the forces of orthodoxy to minister to the needs of the public. His Widows' Home at Baranagar was con-

ducted by him on orthodox lines, and hence it was a success. When Banerji's failing health forced him to give up his work, the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj did not take up the work as it entailed conducting the Home on orthodox lines. Banerji's liberal Hinduism had several peculiar features. It was distinctively practical. He attached great importance to prayer. Prayer had been his strength and refuge throughout his life, public and private. It was combined with real intense faith. Thus with this happy combination of his forceful prayers and deep faith, all his difficulties vanished away. Banerji went further than this. He believed that diseases could be cured by the combined influence of prayer and faith. It is said that on many occasions, he effected wonderful cures by this means alone. Pandit Sitanath Tattvabhushan, Banerji's good friend, writing about this matter, testified thus:—

I must confess that to me Mr. Banerji's faith in such cure seems to belong to a pre-scientific state, but I must give him the credit of being thoroughly sincere, and also admit that the instances referred to are really marvellous and inexplicable by the known laws of nature.

Throughout the last fifty years, Banerji invariably kept up his practice of constant self-examination and morning family devotions, accompanied by fervent singing and discourses. It is important to note here, that Banerji's discourses were very effective. He had a wonderful faith in an ever-active Providence. This faith is more than abundantly justified in his career. His personal religion made him a unique lover

of peace. He tried his best to bring about a settlement of the religious disputes. He was a prominent member of the Arbitration Committee appointed at Calcutta. He established the Sadharan Dharma Sabha in 1873, which aimed at the "union and mutual co-operation of the various religious bodies of the country without, at the same time, any surrender of their peculiar doctrines and practices." This liberal movement was not approved of by many of his Brahmo friends. In the course of a few years, his Sabha failed for want of active workers to keep it going in the absence of Banerji. However it served a useful purpose in radiating its influence of cheerful and liberal thoughts among those who joined it.

In 1873, in a place popularly called "Sasi Babu's Hall" built mainly at Banerji's expense and partly by subscriptions gathered from friends in England, Banerji founded the Sasipada Institute, for "the diffusion of useful knowledge and doing other good and charitable work in and around Baranagar." To this Institute, he gave away his own private Library and Museum. He also presented funds for the maintenance and improvement of the Sadharan Dharma Sabha. In this Institute, a variety of philanthropic work is carried on. During the day, it is used as the school-room for the female Boarding School and was used as a class-room for the Widows' Home when the same was in existence. In the evening, classes are held there for instructing working men and boys. The

Institute has a reading room attached to it. In this room, a good number of English and Bengali periodicals are kept on the table. Meetings are also held there to promote objects of local interest and to advance the cause of religion and morals. All these associations carrying on their activities in the Institute were endowed by Banerji with what little he possessed.

The last work of Banerji for the service of humanity is the Devalaya. It was founded on the 1st of January 1908 at Calcutta. It is but the resuscitation of his old Sadharan Dharma Sabha in a modern garb and on a permanent footing. Devalaya, we quote from the trust deed, is an association "for devotional exercises, and for literary, scientific, philanthropic and charitable works. It aims at the promotion of religious devotion and the establishment of unity, brotherly feeling, and mutual co-operation among the various communities of the country without any surrender of their respective peculiar doctrines and practices" The founder of this Devalaya—Banerji—made over to the public his own dwelling house in Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, by a trust deed. There are more than 1,200 members of Devalaya, and they belong to different communities and different faiths. Hindus, Mussalmans, Christians, Brahmos, Arya Samajists, Buddhists, Theosophists and others are all included on the roll of this new universal church. In this House of God, every day the faithful of various creeds meet for worship. On

every Sunday, in the Devalaya, there are gatherings for children.

Dr. Sir Rabindra Nath Tagore speaks of the Devalaya in the following appreciative terms :—

When a seed germinates, it rends the earth, but when it develops into a full-grown tree with its branches and twigs, it gives shade to the earth. Time was when the Brahmo Samaj raised its head in and through opposition. The establishment of the Devalaya is a proof positive of the fact that the day of struggle and opposition for the Brahmo Samaj is drawing to its close. It is my belief that they alone have rightly understood the mission of the Brahmo Samaj who are attempting to provide in the shade of this huge tree a common meeting ground for all.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The fifty years' service of Mr. Banerji in the field of social and religious reform in which there are hardly many Indians to compare with him, may justly be styled great service taking into consideration the purest motives that inspired it. Sir Stuart Bayley, formerly Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, one who knew Banerji well, said of him :—

The qualities which struck me in my personal intercourse with him were an unusual combination: the meditative introspection, the metaphysical receptiveness of the best Eastern mood, combined with the moral energy and organizing capacity of the West; a consuming passion for the welfare of his people and all-embracing tolerance of creed, founded not on carelessness but on comprehensiveness.

In almost all his beneficent activities, Banerji was a true pioneer. So far as his work for the emancipation of females was concerned, we have seen that unlike many other reformers he commenced reforming his own home, and thereupon secured true coadjutors and real helpmates. Till he commenced his

work of female education no body had ever paid any serious attention so far as Bengal is concerned, to the question of educating married women and widows. Even in the case of widows the ways in which Banerji conducted his Home were quite novel. Never before his time was such a Home started. It paved the way directly or indirectly for the several Homes in different parts of India. The relationship he had established between himself and the inmates of the Home was such that, whenever Banerji had to leave for a tour and when he gathered the inmates of the Home to bid them farewell, a wail of lamentation arose from them and nothing could restore them to perfect rest but his return. He was the first person to take his wife to England. He with the valuable assistance of his wife, educated widows, made them feel their miserable position in Hindu society and helped them to emancipate themselves. He brought about the remarriages of suitable widows. He brought up his family in such an ideal way that when his second wife entered his home, she received warm welcome from his four elderly sons, and the relationship that existed between the step-mother and her children was so ideal that no visitor to their house was able to find out that they were not mother and children. The atmosphere of his home was so angelic that the venerable pandit Krishnahari Siromani of Bhatpara, Banerji's family Guru, remarked that it looked like the Ashrams of the Rishis he had read of in ancient books.

Thus, judging these activities from the standpoint of the times in which they were carried out single-handedly and that too when they were not even thought of by others, one really admires the inward spirit that prompted this great soul. Banerji has rightly been styled by Satindranath Ray Choudhuri, the Honorary Secretary of the Devalaya, as "The Apostle of Improvement." Sitanath Tattvabhushan has truly called Banerji the last great Bengal Reformer inasmuch as after him no great reformer has been born in Bengal; all who have arisen have followed Banerji and his noble contemporaries, Keshab Chandra Sen, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and a few others. Banerji fully realized the inwardness of the reform movements needed for India. He saw with the vision of a prophet that India's salvation would come only through the union of the various castes and classes, through the elevation of the backward depressed classes, and through the emancipation of its ignorant, down-trodden, dumb millions of women who not only remain passive, but who by their ways, born of total ignorance, clog the wheels of national progress. He recognised the supreme importance of the voice of conscience in the soul of man.

Indeed his was a truly rounded life, as all the three elements of purity, prayer and service were wonderfully combined in him. He was a genuine social worker inasmuch as he worked voluntarily, conscientiously, intelligently according to his light, and

persistently according to his strength, both on his individual account and as a part of various organized movements, for the promotion of common welfare and according to the spirit of the motto of his Devalaya : "God is One and Humanity One." He succeeded so eminently in his social services because he had a deep knowledge of human nature. He had patience, perseverance, tact, originality, forethought, moral activity, and self-restraint. Banerji was frugal, simple, thoughtful, careful, open-minded and impartial. He stuck to his work in spite of disappointments. He ignored unreasoning complaints. He quietly answered misrepresentations ; and was never disheartened by ingratitude. We cannot better sum up Banerji's life than by saying that "he fed the hungry, gave shelter to the homeless, knowledge to the ignorant and medicine to the sick. He was always a friend to the needy."

Banerji died in January 1925, at the ripe old age of 85, mourned by a large circle of friends and disciples. By his death the country lost a great social worker and reformer. The last rites were performed according to Brahmo way by his illustrious son Sir Albion Banerji who was then Dewan of Mysore.



ANANDA MOHAN BOSE

ANANDA MOHAN BOSE

PRE-EMINENT by pure intellect, Ananda Mohan Bose was likewise pre-eminent by those virtues which Hindus are proud to claim as the distinctive features of their civilisation. Perfect humility of heart, devout prayerfulness, undoubting reliance on God, and whole-souled service that looks not too eagerly to the result,—these are the marks of the truly religious spirit everywhere, and they dwelt in Mr. Bose as they dwelt in few other public men. Patriotism was with him a passion. His Address as President of the 14th Indian National Congress held in Madras brought tears into many eyes. And his last public appearance at the Federation Hall in Calcutta, when a deep sense of wrong done to his people made him quit his bed of illness to speak a word on their behalf,—what can be more pathetic, more impressive than that? Even the famous ‘dying speech’ of Chatham does not touch our hearts so nearly, tainted as it was by a desire for effect which it would be a sacrilege to suggest in the case of Mr. Bose.

CAREER AS STUDENT

A. M. Bose was born in East Bengal in 1846. From the beginning his acute intellect brought him distinction above all his fellows. He secured the first place in the Entrance Examination of 1862 when he

was sixteen, and kept that place in the higher examinations also. He was educated at the Calcutta Presidency College, where he was specially marked for his aptitude for mathematics. The Principal Mr. Sutcliffe, on the occasion of a Viceregal visit, presented him to the august visitor as a brilliant Indian student. Later, on his taking the M. A. Degree, he was complimented by Sir Henry S. Maine, who, as Vice-Chancellor, declared, in his Convocation Address, that Mr. Bose's abilities would have secured him high distinction in the Mathematical Tripos at Cambridge. On leaving College, he competed for and won the Premchand Roychand Scholarship of Rs. 10,000. After serving a short term as Professor of Mathematics in the Engineering College, Mr. Bose proceeded to England in the same ship with Babu Keshub Chunder Sen. There he joined Christ's College, Cambridge. During his three years' residence in that University he devoted himself to a study of the exact sciences, and his ability and character were so marked that he was President of the Cambridge Union for some time. His career was crowned by his coming out sixteenth Wrangler at the Mathematical Tripos. A few months afterwards Mr. Bose was called to the Bar, and returned to India in 1874.

AT THE BAR

Industrious and keen-witted, Mr. Bose might have achieved a great distinction at the Calcutta Bar, but, somehow, he turned his attention at the

commencement to mofussil practice. In this he soon reached a high degree of success and made enough money to invest some of it in the Assam Tea Industry. On one occasion his defence speech in a criminal case before the High Court Sessions received a warm encomium from Mr. John D. Bell, then Standing Counsel in Calcutta, who referred to it in a speech of his own at the Trades' Dinner as the most splendid defence he had ever heard out of Westminster Hall.

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY

Law and Tea enterprise could not engross Mr. Bose's energies. It would have been a wonder if his mind had not been attracted to the problems of education. He was the *beau ideal* of students, and in all that concerned them he took a lively interest. In 1877 he was appointed Fellow of the University, and next year, while yet barely thirty-two he was elected to be Syndic in the Faculty of Arts. He made a large number of proposals for the improvement of education generally, one of them being a vigorous plea for the conversion of the Calcutta University into a Teaching University. In this, of course, he did not succeed. But he succeeded in getting the age-limit for Matriculation candidates abolished, and in remodelling the Premchand Roychand Scholarship Examination so as to make it an incentive to future work, rather than a reward for past labours. His position among educationists was now so eminent and his character was so high that Lord Ripon, it is said,

offered him the Presidentship of the famous Education Commission of 1882. The honour was declined by Mr. Bose, who saw that his being a native would detract from the weight of the Commission's recommendations. If the story is true, it adds another claim to the long list of claims he has to the admiration and loving memory of his countrymen. It must bring the blush to the cheeks of those public men who hanker after office, official favours, and official decorations. Though he declined the Presidentship of the Commission, he cheerfully accepted a seat on it, and we can guess, though we have no means of knowing, how useful he must have been to Sir W. W. Hunter and his other colleagues. Some time before this, *i.e.*, in 1880, he had started a school teaching up to the Entrance standard and manned it with able young men from the University. On this institution, known as the City School, and located at first in a small building, he spent much of his anxious thought; and it rapidly grew into what is now known as the City College. By the year 1884, that is to say, within four years of its starting, it acquired a building of its own, which was opened by Lord Ripon. To the catalogue of Mr. Bose's educational services, already long, have still to be added the watchful care and sacrifice with which he kept up a school for girls, until the Bethune College Committee amalgamated it with their institution.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

In the political sphere and in the religious, Mr. Bose was no less active. He was nominated, in

1886, to the Bengal Legislative Council by the Government, and in 1895 he sat in the Council for the second time as the representative of the Calcutta University. Of his labours there, which were worthy of his great renown, we need only mention two efforts which were specially brilliant. One was his speech supporting a proposal to amend the Act of Incorporation of the Calcutta University with a view to give it a teaching side; the other was his criticism of the Village Chaukidari Bill. Besides this, he was a Municipal Commissioner, and took a prominent part in founding and establishing on a firm basis the National Indian Association, and the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. Like all emotional persons, Mr. Bose was intensely religious. His piety and zeal were most unaffected, while his private life was marked by firm friendships and the most openhanded charity.

AS A BRAHMO LEADER

In fact even his educational and political activities, considerable as they were, pale before his work as a Brahmo Leader. He was a born preacher and teacher of religion. While he was yet at Mymensingh he came under the influence of the Brahmo Samaj. Later when he came to Calcutta and joined the college, association with Brahmos became more intimate and constant. The life and example of the Maharishi and Keshab won him over completely and in 1869 he with twenty others formally embraced the Brahmo faith. After the initiation he quickly rose to power and

influence among the fellow Brahmos of Calcutta. He was far and away the most intellectual of the group and what was more, for a young man of thirty his spiritual authority was second only to that of Keshab himself. But soon the time came for him even to supersede his great master. Personally Ananda Mohan was of a shy and retiring disposition but the times called for his leadership and he rose to the occasion. We have seen how in 1878 there broke out a split among the Brahmos consequent on the Kuch Behar marriage of which an account is given in the sketch of Keshab. In that unfortunate transaction, Keshab was the butt of considerable criticism from the young men of the party who did not scruple to call in question his discrepancy between practice and precept. Now when a schism in the Samaj came, they straightaway elected Ananda Mohan to be their Minister in the new Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Thenceforward for many a year Ananda Mohan continued to guide the Samaj with unflinching tact and earnestness. His wisdom and moderation kept the Samaj free from mere vendetta against respected leaders. Ananda Mohan more than preserved the dignity of the new Samaj which was bereft of the guidance of such veteran and powerful leaders as Keshab and Mazumdar. As was pointed out by a well-known Brahmo preacher, "the ability and judiciousness, the strength and restraint with which he conducted himself amply justified the wisdom of the choice." Though on the ground of prin-

ciple he dissociated himself from Keshab he did not allow this difference of opinion to affect his personal relation with the great leader which was one of uniform courtesy and veneration. Year after year Ananda Mohan was elected President of the New Samaj a position which he held for many a year with unfailing vigour and success. . He built up the new constitution of the Samaj, he raised educational and philanthropic institutions as adjuncts to the Samaj; he gave a local habitation to the Samaj and created a colony of Brahmos to live around the *Mandir*; and by his eloquence and energy and the fine example of his own character he raised the whole tone of Brahmo controversy. Thus his services to the Samaj were inestimable.

IN ENGLAND AGAIN

Towards the end of 1897, his health failing, he was advised to try the waters of Germany. After a short stay he felt strong enough to go to England, where he spent a few months. During this period he placed his services at the disposal of the British Committee of the Congress, and addressed many public meetings, pleading for the redress of India's wrongs. He did magnificent work on this occasion, but at great cost to his health. On his return after an absence of nearly twelve months his grateful countrymen paid him the highest honour in their gift.

CONGRESS PRESIDENT

In 1898 he was chosen to preside over the 14th Indian National Congress. The roll of Congress

Presidents has many illustrious names, but Mr. Bose's is not the least illustrious among them. He more than-justified the choice of the Madras public. His oration yields to none in its literary polish, and as it was delivered in accents of earnestness and faith, its eloquence had a telling effect. Its recapitulation of Congress politics we need not here reproduce. But Mr. Bose's reference to Mr. Gladstone who had just died must not be passed over. The departed statesman's religious side appealed strongly to Mr. Bose, and the tribute that he uttered came from a full and sympathetic heart. His appeal on behalf of the Motherland was one of the most stirring appeals that were ever made to the hearts of Congressmen, and they must have been hard, indeed, who did not feel as if they were about to cry when the orator asked, "Shall India, brother-delegates, be a living or a dying nation?" We shall quote the brilliant peroration here:—

THE MOTHERLAND

Ladies and Gentlemen,—I began with a reference to Mr. Gladstone and I will finish, too, with a reference to that great man. It was a cold morning and closely muffled up. Pale and ill, the great statesman was entering his carriage at Bournemouth making the last journey of his life on his way to Hawarden there to die. A crowd had assembled at the station to bid him fare-well, to have a last look at the face not much longer destined for earth. In response to their cheers and salutations, Mr. Gladstone uttered these words—the last he uttered in public—he who had so often held audiences of his countrymen spell-bound by the magic of his voice, "God bless you all, and this place, and the land you love so well." The words were few, and, the reporters added, the voice was low. But there was in them, the last words of the parting hero, a pathos of farewell and of benediction, a deep thrill as of another world, which produced an effect not less, perhaps but more, than the great efforts of a happier time. And let us, too,

following those simple words of Mr. Gladstone ask God that He may bless us all and this dear land of ours. Do you, do we, Brother-Delegates, love that land, the land that gave us birth; the land beloved of the gods, they say, in ages gone by, when the world was young and darkness lay over many of its peoples, the land where knowledge lighted her earliest torch, the arts of life and civilization found their home and philosophy pondered deep over the problems of life; where Rishis sang those hymns to the Father in the Shining Sky, the earliest of the Aryan world, which still live and throb in our hearts, and the eyes of the Seer saw visions of things not of this world; that land where after ages the sundered streams of Aryan life unite once again in the present day? That land, Brother-Delegates, deserves all our love. Love her the more, cling to her the closer for her misfortunes of the past, of the shadows and the clouds that have hung over her in the times that have gone. After centuries to darkness, the dawn of a better day has now opened for her, and the golden light has already begun to stream over her fair face. It depends on us, Brothers and Sisters, Fellow-citizens of this ancient land, it depends on us, on our sense of duty, on our spirit of loving sacrifice and earnest effort, whether the streaks of that light shall broaden and grow unto the lovely day. At length has India awakened from the stupor of ages, the fire of her intellect, of her heroism, of her piety, dimmed but yet not wholly extinguished, and waiting but the breeze of manly effort and kindly help to burn once again in the time to come, let us hope, with splendour and lustre as of old.

Lord Salisbury spoke the other day of the living and dying nations of the world. Shall India, Brother-Delegates, be a living nation, shall the glories that were hers remain for ever a memory of the past, or shall they once again be realities in the time before us? On us, Brother-Delegates, depends the answer, on our efforts, on the lives we live and the sacrifices we make, not in the political field alone but in many another field; and let us not forget that never was progress won without sacrifice. And in that effort, depend upon it, we shall get, as indeed we claim, the loving help and the ardent sympathy of the great Nation into whose hands Providence had entrusted the destinies of this land.

The German host marched to its triumph to the cry of "God and Fatherland." Let ours be a still dearer cry, the cry of "God and Motherland," as our mission also is the holier and nobler enterprise of peace, of love, of loyal progress, of every duty to our Beloved Sovereign faithfully discharged, of individual growth and national regeneration. Hear we, my friends, the trumpet-call of duty resounding to us amid the stirring scenes, the moving enthusiasm, the thrilling sights of this great gathering? Yes, the call sounds clear, but let our hearts

gather the strength to respond to that call, and to be true to her, our Common Mother, the land of our birth, to be true and faithful to the light that is within us, and to every noble impulse that stirs within us. And may we, as we return to our homes, to the spheres of our daily duty, carry a little more of the living love to our country than when we came, a little more of the earnest longing to be good and true and useful before the day closeth and our life's work is done.

For an adequate illustration, however, of Mr. Bose's style of oratory, one must read the whole of his concluding speech to the Madras Congress. It was *ex tempore* and abounded in that sort of diction that the highest pulpit oratory affects. It is in one key of exalted feeling. It is too long to quote here, and no extract will do it justice.

LAST SERVICE

His health broke down after this effort, and he practically retired from public life. But there was to be another occasion for his service. From what he himself described as his last bed of illness he was borne on a litter to lay the foundation-stone of the Federation Hall which was intended to mark the determination of the Bengalee nation to remain united, notwithstanding Lord Curzon's attempt to split them asunder. He was not able to stand or read the whole of his address. The honour of reading that noble address fell to the great orator of Bengal—Babu Surendranath Banerji—whose stentorian voice must have enhanced the effect even of that speech. And the presence of the dying leader was itself a great inspiration.

Few passages in the whole range of patriotic literature can rival his speech on this occasion in power

or beauty. We are sure none of our readers would grudge it if we reproduced it here entire; but we must resist the temptation, and give only parts of this gem of Indian eloquence:

It is, indeed, a day of mourning to us, when the province has been sundered by official fiat, and the gladsome spirit of union and of community of interest which had been growing stronger day by day, runs the danger of being wrecked and destroyed and many other evils into which this is not the occasion to enter are likely to follow in its wake. And yet in the dispensation of Providence, not unoften out of evil cometh good, and the dark and threatening cloud before us is so fringed with beauteous gold and brightening beams, and so fraught with the prospect of a newer and stronger national union, that we may look upon it almost as a day of rejoicing * * * I belong to the sundered province of East Bengal and yet, my brethern, never did my heart cling more dearly to you or your hearts cherish us more lovingly than at the present moment and for all the future that lies before us. "The official" separation has drawn us, indeed, far closer together, and made us stronger in united brotherhood. Hindu, Mussalman and Christian, North, East and West with the resounding sea beneath, all belong to one indivisible Bengal; say again, my friends, from the depth of your hearts, to one indivisible Bengal, the common, the beloved, the ever-cherished Motherland of us all. In spite of every other separation of creed, this creed for the common Motherland will bring us nearer heart to heart and brother to brother. And this Federation Hall, the foundation-stone of which is being laid to-day, not only on this spot of land, but on our moistened tearful hearts is the embodiment and visible symbol of this spirit of union, the memorial to future generations yet unborn of this unhappy day and of the unhappy policy which has attempted to separate us into two parts. It will, I trust, be a place for all our national gatherings, in its rooms will be held social reunions and meetings for different purposes.

We have come, most of us, bare of foot and in garbs of mourning to the site of our future shrine. Silent are the busy marts of men and silent is the roar of trade. We are present in tens of thousands here and millions throughout the province, I believe, are fasting to-day and no fires shall be kindled in our hearths. But let the fire burn in our hearts, purify us and kindle an enthusiasm which shall be all the brighter and all the warmer for the quenched fire in our homes.

And now, farewell, my friends with these, which may perchance be the last words which I shall utter to you on this side of Eternity. Farewell on this day of fraternal union when the

bond of Rakhi is tied in our arms. Much that comes pouring into my heart must remain unsaid. Ours is not the Land of the Rising Sun, for to Japan, victorious, self-sacrificing and magnanimous belongs that title, but may I not say that ours is the land where the sun is rising again, where after ages of darkness and gloom with the help, let me gratefully acknowledge, of England and English culture, the glowing light is bursting once again over the face of the land? Let us all pray that the grace of God may bless our course, direct our steps and steel our hearts. Let action and not words be our motto and inspiring guide. And then shall my dream be realized of a beautiful and blessed land by nature and filled by men true and manly, and heroic in every good cause—true children of the Motherland. Let us see in our heart of hearts the Heavens opening and the angels descending. In ancient books the gods are described as showering flowers and garlands on the scene of a notable battle. See we not, my friends, those flowers dropped to-day from the self-same hands, welcoming us to the new battle, not of blood but of manly and stern resolve in the country's cause?

Writing of this great speech Sir Surendranath observed in his *Reminiscences* that he regarded it "as the greatest of his oratorical performances and one of the noblest orations to which it has been his privilege to listen."

CONCLUSION

Death was close at hand. A life of sixty years cannot in India be called short, and when it has been marked by so many honours and so many useful services, it may even be called long and full. Mr. Surendra Nath Bannerjee summed up his life truly when he said: "There is lying on the litter the earthly remains of one of the greatest, noblest, and purest of mortals." Mr. Bose used his rich gifts of head and heart in the furtherance of unselfish causes and for the advancement of his country. He lived a life of piety, charity, and noble endeavour.

Pundit Sivanath Sastri

EARLY TRIALS AND EDUCATION

PANDIT SASTRI, was born at Changripota, the home of his maternal ancestors, about twelve miles to the south-east of Calcutta, on the 31st January, 1847. Though the child of very long-lived parents, for his father died at ninety-five and his mother at eighty-five, he grew up with a weak and sickly constitution, suffered throughout his life from long and frequent attacks of illness, and ended his career much earlier than either of his parents, for he was only 72 at the time of his death. He traces his continued ill-health to ignorant and careless nursing in his infancy and to privations and hardships during his school and college career. For a considerable time after his birth his mother was under the selfish domination of a near relative, an aunt, an elder sister of his father, who, with her husband and children, lived in a joint family with Sastri's parents. This lady's treatment of Sâstri's mother was so annoying that it kept the latter in bad temper for whole days and led her to neglect her child in the midst of the heavy domestic drudgery imposed upon her by her domestic tyrant. The leanness and defects of formation induced by imperfect and negligent nursing lasted more or less throughout his life and were

the cause of the frequent attacks of illness which, in his latter days, undermined his health and eventually carried him away. However, when the child grew up to be a boy and was fit for education, the mother herself taught him his primers and jealously guarded him from bad company. He had, however, to pass through the usual Pathsala and school courses in his village till his tenth year before he was taken to Calcutta. Meanwhile, in his ninth year, he went through the initiation of a "twice-born" boy and was carefully taught the devotional practices of a Brahmana by his pious great-grand-father. Of this gentleman Sastri always spoke with the deepest respect and he tells many a story about him in his autobiography. He seems to have once for all impressed on his young descendant's mind the ideal of a pious life, and though the latter's English education must necessarily have modified the details of this ideal, its general character, and specially its impelling power, remained the same throughout his life. However, in 1856 young Sivanath was taken to Calcutta and through the influence of Pandit Isvarchandra Vidyasagar, who was a great friend of his father, was put into the Sanskrit College to learn both English and Sanskrit. Vidyasagar was then the Principal and Sivanath's uncle, Dvarakanath Vidyabhushan, a Professor, of the College. It may be mentioned here that Sivanath's father himself was a Sanskrit scholar and bore the same title, Vidyasagar, as his illustrious friend.

THE FIRST MARRIAGE

Sivanath was married for the first time when he was only twelve or thirteen. According to the custom of the Southern Vedics his betrothal had taken place when he was only two years and his 'bride' only one month old. This marriage, though of this unnatural and grotesque character, proved a very happy one. The first Mrs. Sastri developed a kind, patient and philanthropic character which not only won the heart of her husband, but made her universally respected in the Brahmo community. She gladly shared with our young reformer his early trials, privations and persecutions, comforted and strengthened him in the struggles of his mature life, and heartily rejoiced in the triumphs and successes that rewarded his pious labours.

THE SECOND MARRIAGE

Up to this time young Sivanath had not seen much of the Brahmo Samaj. He had only noticed how cruelly the four or five Brahmos living in his village had been persecuted by the villagers, specially by the village zemindar, who also tried at first to thwart their efforts for the promotion of female education in the village. Gradually Sivanath learnt to respect these pioneers of Brahmoism, and in Calcutta he came into personal contact with some of the leaders of the Brahmo movement. He imbibed liberal views, but his inner nature was yet untouched by living religion. While Sivanath was in this stage of his progress, and about eighteen or nineteen years

old, his father, for some reason or other, got displeased with his daughter-in-law and her relatives and determined to have his son married to a second wife. Sivanath protested respectfully and as strongly as he could, and he also appealed to his mother to prevent the outrage. But the father's fury and obstinate determination carried everything before it. Sivanath had to yield. No higher authority than the father's had yet been revealed to him. He consoled himself with the thought that as Rama had suffered exile to please his father, so would he suffer life-long misery by pleasing his own father. The marriage took place, and it not only caused life-long misery to more than one person, but was a butt of criticism for his enemies throughout his whole career. Sastri's second wife, who is childless, survives him. She has ever been a tender and devoted wife, quietly serving her husband and faithfully performing her domestic duties. She was specially a stay and solace to her illustrious husband in his last days.

CONVERSION TO BRAHMOISM

Good cometh out of evil. Sastri's second marriage, so very offensive, and justly so, to Brahmo eyes, and those of all right-thinking persons, proved the cause of his conversion to Brahmoism. He became deeply repentant at the injustice he had done to himself and two innocent beings. His repentance, which was so deep that he says in his autobiography that its memory made him tremble even when writing it, led him to prayer, and prayer

brought him strength. It led him also to attend the Brahmo Samaj services. When his father knew this he remonstrated against it. But Sivanath's devotional exercises had already made him so strong,—had given him such courage of conviction,—that he plainly told his father, "Father, you know I have never disobeyed you, and I am still ready to do your bidding in all other matters. But you must not interfere with my religion. I cannot give up attending the Brahmo Samaj services." The father was taken aback by this astounding answer from his son and returning home told his wife that her son "was dead." The mother's cries brought some neighbours there, who, when they incredulously inquired of the cause of Sivanath's "death," were told by the heart-broken father that what had taken place was equivalent to death, though not actual death, for his boy had begun to attend the Brahmo Samaj and would not listen to his remonstrances. All this suffering on the father's part and the persecution that followed may be supposed to be due to the father's ignorance of Brahmoism and his deep faith in popular Hinduism. But it was not so in the present case and it may be doubted if persecutors are men of faith in any case. Pundit Sastri says plainly in his autobiography that his father was an avowed atheist and often argued with him against the existence of God,—that when his mother found him indulging in this dangerous pastime, she remonstrated against it and dragged the boy away from his presence. Sivanath,

on the contrary, was a staunch theist from his boyhood and tells us that he never, in any period of his life, doubted the existence of God. Pitted against the father's atheism and atheistic teachings, the son's faith shines even more gloriously than it would have otherwise done.

OPEN BREACH WITH IDOLATRY

Conviction of the truth of Brahmoism and conformity to idolatrous practice in deference to the feelings of relatives and castemen is not a rare phenomenon. In fact such conformity is a common practice and the Brahmo Samaj has coined a phrase—"non-anusthanik Brahmos"—to denote those adherents of its doctrines among whom this practice is found. But Sastri's conversion to Brahmoism was never of this half-hearted character. Even before his formal initiation into Brahmoism, he openly broke with idolatry. The worship of the idols set up in his paternal home was a task which used to be entrusted to him whenever he went home from Calcutta during the College vacations. The first time he went home after his conversion, he told his mother he could not undertake the task any longer. The mother remonstrated with tears, but found the son immovable, and expected a furious outburst of the father's temper. The outburst came. As soon as he heard of his son's determination, the father rushed with a stick to beat the non-conformist to conformity. Facing him calmly, Sivanath said with firm determination: "Why beat me in vain? I shall silently bear your thrashing. But

even though you take out one bone after another from this body, you can never more make me enter that room (where the idols were set up.)” The father was staggered by this firmness and did not offer any more resistance. After spending half-an-hour in silently indulging in his fit of temper, “like an offended serpent,” he excused Sivanath from the task declined by him and took it upon himself.

PROMOTING WIDOW-REMARRIAGE

Sastri was, even from his young days, a great admirer of Pandit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar and an advocate of his widow-remarriage propaganda. In the period of his life under notice, when he seems to have just matriculated and secured a Government scholarship, he actively promoted two widow-remarriages and helped with his small income the pairs who were, on account of the bold step they had taken, forsaken and cruelly persecuted by their friends and relatives.

JOINING KESAV'S PARTY

Even after his conversion to Brahmoism and his open rejection of idolatry, Sivanath's sympathy was for a period of time more with the conservative party of Maharshi Devendranath Thakur than with the progressive party of Brahmananda Kesavchandra Sen. His attachment to the latter dates from the day of the first *nagarsankirtan* (street-singing) inaugurated by Kesav. He had not joined the street-singing. In fact everything smacking of Vaishnavism—and street-singing, with its typical instruments

of music, the *khol* and the *kartal*, was an imitation of the Vaishnava mode of preaching—was almost an abomination to him. But when he read the opening lines of the song Kesav and his party had sung that morning in the streets of Calcutta, it seemed to him that, as he tells us the call embodied in them had directly come to him. The lines may be thus translated:—

“Come, O brethren, the night of misery is now at an end,
The name of Brahman is sounded in the streets.

Men, women, all have equal rights

Salvation is for all who love, there is no distinction of
castes”

“This call,” says Sastri in his autobiography, “touched my heart. It seemed to me that it called me. The ideal of Brahmoism presented in it charmed and possessed my soul.” He at once ran to Kesav’s house, and later heard Kesav’s address on “Regenerating Faith,” which “opened a new door of spiritual life” to him.

PUBLIC INITIATION INTO BRAHMOISM

In 1869, on the day of the opening of the Brahma Mandir in Machua Bazaar Street, Sivanath was publicly initiated by Kesav into Brahmoism along with twenty more young men among whom were some who, like Sivanath, became prominent in Brahma history, for instance, Ananda Mohan Bose, Rajaninath Ray and Krishnavihari Sen, Kesav’s younger brother. The initiation identified him once for all with the Brahma Samaj of India, the progressive section of the Brahma Samaj of those days, which had seceded from the parent church, the Calcutta or Adi Brahma Samaj, in 1866.

DISCARDING OF THE SACRIFICIAL THREAD

The discarding of the sacrificial thread (*yajna upavita*) on the part of a Brahmo of the Brahmana and other "twice-born" (*dvija*) castes, was a well-recognised principle of the Brahmo Samaj of India. In fact it was their emphasis on this principle, more than anything else, that had made them secede from the parent church. The thread, as its very name signifies, is a badge of *yajna*, the worship of the Vedic gods through sacrifices offered to them. It is also a badge of caste; it distinguishes the *dvija* from the *sudra* and its variety of form divides the *dvijas* themselves into three castes, the Brahmana, the Kshatriya and the Vaisya. The leaders of the Brahmo Samaj of India rightly felt that the universal brotherhood preached by Brahmoism could never be realised if the retention of this badge of caste was permitted. They therefore insisted upon its discarding by those who would be faithful to Brahmoism both in theory and practice. Before his initiation, Sivanath often went without his thread, but he had not finally made up his mind to discard it. The time now came when he must take this step and take also its consequences, which were nothing short of utter alienation from relatives and castemen. And now after deep cogitations he did make up his mind and discarded the thread regardless of consequences.

BEGINNING OF PERSECUTION

When Sivanath's father heard that he had given up his sacrificial thread, he took him home and kept

him under guard for over a month. The old man had not either the wisdom or the toleration of his brother-in-law, Pandit Dvarakanath Vidyabhushan, who had heard calmly what Sivanath had to say in defence of the bold step he had taken, and though he did not see eye to eye with him in the matter, had the sense to perceive that violence was out of place in such a case. Vidyabhushan's advice to Sivanath's father went unheeded. The son calmly submitted to the imprisonment imposed upon him. But his long confinement, which left him unchanged, convinced his father of the futility of his efforts to bring him under his submission. He released him, but for eighteen or nineteen years after this, says Pundit Sastri, he neither saw him nor spoke to him. Sivanath, however, though forbidden to visit his paternal home by his father, could not but go there to see his mother, whose condition was at this time simply indescribable. He used to go home only when he heard that his father was absent from it. But sometimes it happened that the father arrived before the son left and the former was informed of the latter's presence in the house. At such times, as already mentioned before, the father would hire ruffians to beat the son! This went on for years, and the old man, poor as he was, is said to have spent no less an amount than Rs. 22 for hiring ruffians, during these years! Pundit Sastri credits all this to his father's firmness of will and wishes he had more of this virtue in his own character! However, it is due to old Harananda to say that when,

eight years after this, his son fell dangerously ill, and was in straitened circumstances, he procured money by selling some household jewellery and came with his wife, Sastri's mother, to take care of him. He stuck to his determination of not seeing and speaking to his son, but placed the patient in charge of his mother and made arrangements for his proper treatment. The final reconciliation came many years after.

UNDER KESAV'S INFLUENCE

Sivanath seems to have graduated shortly after his initiation by Kesav. Even before graduation he had completed,—what was allowed in those days,—the usual course of lectures in law. His intention was to come out as a B.L. and practise as a vakil. The Principal of his College specially encouraged him in his legal studies, for he hoped to secure a high office for his pupil in the Judicial Service, as the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal had told him he would prefer to others students of the Sanskrit College in the department on account of their direct knowledge of Hindu law. But contact with Kesav had radically changed the course of his thoughts and inclinations. He now wished “to follow Kesav's footsteps and devote his life to preaching Brahmoism.” Kesav encouraged and helped him in carrying out his noble intention. Soon after passing his M. A. Examination (in 1872), when the title of ‘Sastri’ was conferred on him by his college, he placed himself under Kesav's training in the Bharatasram, an institution just founded by Kesav for missionaries and other

devout Brahmos with the object of realising the ideal of a reformed and united home. Kesav himself lived there for a time. He gave Sastri a teachership in the female school attached to the home. He was given a monthly allowance, but it was more or less nominal, for the members of the home, at any rate the body of missionaries and probationers, had a common purse. They all lived in great poverty. But poverty never terrified or thwarted Sastri in any period of his life ; he rather invited and welcomed it. However, in the close contact with Kesav and his immediate followers which now began, he discovered something which slowly but surely convinced him that it was not possible for him to walk hand in hand with them. In Kesav's character he saw much that was both sublime and beautiful, and it may be said that throughout the painful differences and bitter controversies that followed in course of a few years Sastri kept in tact his reverence for Kesav as a man of true faith and solid piety. In Kesav's wife too he saw a lady of singular simplicity and tenderness of heart. Many a touching word of homage to "the minister's wife" drops from his pen throughout his autobiography. What troubled and annoyed Sastri was Kesav's peculiar doctrine of *Adesh* (lit. command) or Inspiration. Kesav not only believed that he had God's command for whatever he did for his church and followers, which belief Sastri thought he had every right to entertain, but he wanted that his followers should believe in the truth of the command-

ments he believed to have received and submit to them. Sastri tried in vain to reason Kesav out of this position. His efforts failed, specially because, with the exception of Pratapchandra Mazumdar and Nagendranath Chatturji, he found the whole body of workers under Kesav quite willing to admit his claims to inspiration and yield him implicit obedience. As a consequence of their views on inspiration Kesav and his followers were opposed to the establishment of a constitutional form of church government in the Brahmo Samaj and their actions being judged by the Brahmo public. Sivanath and some of his friends, on the other hand, tried long and strenuously, though without success, to introduce something like a constitution into the Brahmo Samaj of India, a body which was originally founded expressly on a constitutional basis. Another point of difference was Sivanath and his friends' radical views on female liberty and emancipation, while Kesav held rather conservative opinions on the subject. Kesav acted with great tact in the matter and allowed the ladies of the radical party the right, which they wanted, to sit in the Mandir without a *parda* or screen. This, however, only put off for a time, but did not solve, the problem raised by the advocates of female emancipation. These differences made it more than doubtful whether Sastri could act under or in harmony with Kesav in his intended career as a Brahmo missionary. Without, however, finally deciding the question, he was called away from Calcutta, on account of his uncle's illness,

to manage some of the latter's work in connection with a press and a school at Harinabhi near Sastri's paternal home.

IN OPPOSITION TO KESAV

During Sastri's absence from Calcutta, Kesav's differences with the party in his church opposed to some of his views were intensified. As these differences grew, Sastri found himself more and more identified with this party and was at last placed at its head. From Harinabhi he had come to Bhowanipur in the southern suburbs of Calcutta as the Headmaster of the South Suburban School and thence to the Hare School in Calcutta as its Senior Teacher of Sanskrit and Translation. Under his editorship the new party started a monthly named "*Samadarshi* or the Liberal" in which Kesav's views on Inspiration, Special Dispensation, Vairagya (Asceticism), etc. were severely criticised. Sastri and Nagendranath Chatturji began to deliver addresses criticising the sayings and doings of Kesav's party. On the other hand the advocates of high education for women, dissatisfied with what seemed to them Kesav's backward views on the subject, established a school first under the name of the Hindu Mahila and then the Banga Mahila Vidyalay, chiefly with the financial support of Messrs. Durgamohan Das and Ananda Mohan Bose. The emancipation of women was specially advocated in a newly started Bengali Weekly named *Abala Bandhav* (The Woman's Friend) under the editorship of Babu

Dvarakanath Ganguli. With all these men of the new party Pandit Sastri was in close sympathy and co-operation. Under the influence of these leaders a volume of adverse feeling and opinion was slowly but steadily growing against Kesav and his views and tendencies. The latter had lately come into contact with the now well-known Ramkrishna Paramhansa, and the latter's ascetic life and popular exposition of Hindu idolatry and man-worship seemed, in the eyes of his opponents, to charm Kesav more and more and lead him away from the free and rational Theism of the early years of his leadership. None saw more clearly and regretted more deeply than Sastri this growing difference between Kesav and those who had formerly followed him with the deepest reverence and admiration. But even he never dreamed that this difference would soon end in a second schism in the Brahmo Samaj. But a schism was coming nonetheless.

THE KUCH BEHAR MARRIAGE

It is unnecessary to recount the circumstances that actually led to the schism. The schism was the direct result of what is known as the Kuch Behar Marriage on which we have commented in more than one of the preceding sketches. That marriage which made an ugly exhibition of Kesav's compromising attitude in matters relating to his own conduct provoked the ire of the young party led by Ananda Mohan Bose. Sastri was not long in joining the fray. He tried to wean Kesav from the disastrous course

he was following in defiance of fellow-Samajists. Kesav would not listen and his immediate admirers could not see the impropriety of the great leader breaking his own commandments. Kesav turned a deaf ear to all the pleadings of Sivanath and the latter felt there was no alternative but to resort to a public agitation against the conduct of Kesav.

THE SCHISM

Now this agitation in connection with the Kuch Behar marriage revived Sastri's desire to give up secular work and devote himself entirely to work for the Brahmo Samaj. He saw to what pass its then leaders had brought the Samaj and the thought of its future filled him with fear and sadness. He felt his services were wanted and that there should be no more delay in devoting his energies to the cause of Brahmoism. He resigned Government service on the 15th February, 1878, and accepted no other service since then. He devoted himself heart and soul from the 1st of March to the task that called him,—that of saving the Brahmo Samaj in the greatest of crises it has yet passed through. "Henceforth," said he, "God has fully borne my burden. What shall I say of his mercy? I am surprised to think how he has met my wants. He had provided for meeting even such wants as were beyond my imagination. Blessed is his goodness!"

However, what happened after the Kuch Behar Marriage, may be briefly told. The worst features of the marriage, had been anticipated by the protest party.

They had, early in the beginning of the protest movement, called a meeting of Brahmos in the Town Hall and appointed a Committee under the name of "The Brahmo Samaj Committee" "with a view," to use the language of the resolution passed on the occasion, "to take such measures as they consider necessary, in the present crisis in the progress and history of the Brahmo Samaj, to conserve the best interests of the Samaj, and to organise it on a constitutional basis." All that was done now was done through this Committee. Two Weeklies, previously started by the protest party, the *Brahmo Public Opinion* and the *Samalochak*, became the Committee's organs and were largely contributed to and sometimes edited by Sastri. When Kesav's party returned from Kuch Behar, a requisition, largely signed, was sent to Babu Pratapchandra Mazumdar, then Assistant Secretary of the Brahmo Samaj of India, to call a meeting of the members of the Samaj to consider the conduct of the Secretary, Babu Kesavchandra Sen, in connection with the Kuch Behar marriage. A similar letter was addressed to Mr. Mazumdar as Secretary of the Brahma Mandir Congregation, of which Kesav was Minister. Mr. Mazumdar refused to call a meeting of the Samaj till the excited feelings caused by the marriage agitation should have subsided. A meeting of the Congregation was called in Kesav's own name, but when the proceedings began, Kesav's party left it. At this meeting Kesav was deposed from his ministership and

a number of new ministers from the protest party appointed, but the proceedings of the meeting were disturbed throughout by some young men of Kesav's party and thus their validity was questioned by him. In fact no proceedings, however valid, could possibly wrest the Mandir from him, for it had no trust-deed yet, but legally belonged to him, as came out slowly in the course of the controversy. When the new party tried, therefore, to have their service conducted there by their newly appointed ministers, Mr. Sen took possession of the Mandir through the help of the police and ejected the protestors. The latter began to hold their services in a private house near the Mandir, from which they were subsequently removed to another house and thence to the new Mandir in Cornwallis Street when it came to be built. Meanwhile the Brahmo Samaj Committee, when it found that it was impossible to have a meeting of the members of the Brahmo Samaj of India called and that the Samaj was practically identified with Kesav's party and had ceased to exist as the constitutional body it had been intended to be when it was founded, took steps to establish a new central organization of Brahmos on a purely constitutional basis. They addressed a circular letter to the moffussil Samajes and to individual Brahmos asking for their opinion as to the desirability of founding such a body. "In reply to that query," as Pundit Sastri says in his *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, "a large number of Samajes expressed their sense of the need of a separate

organisation, and a letter signed by 425 Brahmos and Brahmikas was also received advocating the same course." Besides, "Out of 250 *anusthanik* Brahmo families in the province, as many as 170 had declared in favour of the foundation of a separate Samaj." Accordingly a public meeting of Brahmos was held in the Town Hall on the 15th May, 1878, and a new central Samaj under the name of the "Sadbaran Brahmo Samaj" duly organised. A statement of the reasons that had influenced the promoters in taking the course and of the principles underlying the new organisation, was adopted at the meeting. The statement was drafted by Pundit Sastri. Omitting the first part, the statement of reasons, which are perhaps sufficiently evident to the readers of this book by this time, we extract below the statement of principles, which will show clearly the general character of the new Samaj and the spirit which inspired Sastri in helping its foundation:—

The foregoing reasons have thus influenced us in forming a separate and independent organisation. We need not enter in this place into a detailed description of our doctrines and principles, but we may shortly state that we believe that faith in a Supreme Being and in existence after death is natural to man; that we regard the relation between God and man to be direct and immediate; that we do not believe in the infallibility of any man or any scripture; whatever book contains truths calculated to ennoble the soul or elevate the character, is a Brahmo's scripture, and whoever teaches such truths is his teacher and guide. We regard the four-fold culture of man's intellect, conscience, affections and devotion, [i.e., the spiritual nature,] as equally important and equally necessary for his salvation. We consider love of God and doing the will of God as equally imperative in the routine of a Brahmo's life. We regard the culture of faith at the sacrifice of reason, or the culture of reason at the sacrifice of faith as equally defective, and as a fruitful source of evil in the religious world. We

regard the worship of the one true God as the highest of a Brahmo's duties and as the best of means to improve the soul, and the neglect of it as a way to spiritual death. We look upon the enjoyment of uncontrolled authority by a single individual in any religious community as a calamity, and far from looking upon freedom of thought as reprehensible, we consider it to be desirable, and regard it as a safeguard against corruption and degeneracy. We regard the belief in an individual being a way to salvation or a link between God and man as a belief unworthy of a Theist, and those who hold such belief as unworthy of the Brahmo name. We consider it to be blasphemy and an insult to the majesty of Heaven to claim divine inspiration for any act opposed to the dictates of reason, truth and morality. From this day we intend devoting ourselves to the propagation of Brahmoism and to the furtherance of the interests of our church apart from some of those with whom we have so long acted, but relying for aid and support on him in whose hands are the destinies of man, who supports every noble purpose and has all along invisibly regulated the course of our church, who, in his inscrutable ways, has given strength when our church languished from very feebleness, has vouchsafed life when her very vitality seemed ebbing away, and who has led her out from the darkness and superstition that eclipsed her face. May he enable us to discharge this sacred mission, may he once more fill all the members of our church with new life and resuscitated energy, may he cause the day of hope to dawn upon the darkness of despair, may he lead us out of the regions of discord and disunion into those of peace and tranquility, may he bless our cause and lead the millions of our countrymen into truth and salvation!" (Appendix I of Vol. I of the *History of the Brahmo Samaj*).

CONSTITUTION OF THE SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ

The first thing that chiefly occupied Pundit Sastri after the foundation of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was the framing of the rules embodying its constitution. In this task he was helped by Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose and other friends. This constitution is a very important thing. That it has saved the Brahmo Samaj from the evils of autocracy,—evils from which it suffered long and grievously—is proved by the fact that during the fifty years it has been promulgated, there has been no schism in the



PUNDIT SIVANATH SASTRI

Samaj. Some persons, who were once prominent members of it, have indeed left it, but that was because they lost faith in its fundamental principles. If they had merely come to hold views differing from those of others but not opposed to the basal principles of the Samaj, which are few and simple, the Samaj had a place for them, for its basis is very broad and covers all possible shades of pure Theism and varying ideals of religious and social life. Even those who may differ from the decisions of its executive body in practical matters have perfect liberty to serve the Samaj in the way that best commends itself to them. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj is the first democratic social organisation that has ever been formed or will ever be formed in India under British rule. It will have the honour of being the parent and model of all such bodies constituted after it, and this honour is due, in not a small degree, to Pundit Sivanath Sastri, who gave many days and nights to the drafting and perfecting of its constitution.

MISSION-WORK

Pundit Sastri, with three colleagues, was ordained as the missionary of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj shortly after its foundation. He made frequent and extensive tours through the length and breadth of the country, visiting Assam and in the north-east, Behar, the United Provinces, the Punjab and Sindh in the north-west, the Bombay Presidency and the Malabar coast in the west, Orissa, Central India, Mysore, Madras and many places in the Northern Circars and

Southern India, besides many towns and villages in Bengal. A history of his tours, with the varied successes and experiences gained in them, would be a most interesting and edifying narrative, as appears from the few incidents related in his Autobiography. He often went out without any funds to pay for his intended journey, paying his railway fare only up to a place not very far from Calcutta and trusting to Providence for the means of his further progress. His motto was not to beg and not to refuse voluntary offers. But help came from the most unexpected quarters and in quite unthought-of ways till the whole tour was completed. Though everywhere received with cordiality and heard with great respect, he went through many privations and difficulties in these travels and once fell seriously ill at Cocanada in the Godavari District. He recovered only after long and careful nursing. In fact his labours as a missionary, whether in his own province or abroad, were always so strenuous and self-denying, that serious attacks of illness were a common feature in his life. However, the result of his life-long exertions was the spread of Brahmoism to remote corners of the country and the cementing of fraternal ties between the moffussil Samajes and the central Samaj in Calcutta.

MINISTRY OF THE CALCUTTA CONGREGATION

Pundit Sastri's long career as the chief preacher and lecturer of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj Mandir in Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, can only be briefly

mentioned in this sketch. His services and sermons were always largely attended and highly appreciated. He employed a colloquial mode of speaking which was most charming and which he was one of the first, if not the very first, to introduce into Bengali oratory. That he was the most successful and popular of those who used it as the medium of communicating their thoughts, we have no doubt. Apt and touching anecdotes abounded in his discourses and brought home to his hearers the lessons he intended to convey to them. He scarcely touched upon deep or abstruse subjects or laid down precise rules or methods of spiritual culture. His main object was to rouse the moral and spiritual sensibilities of his flock, and he believed that once these sensibilities were awakened and men were on their way to the life divine, they would discover, by the light of their own experiences, what things were needful to their souls and what particular modes of *sadhan* they must adopt. His lectures, which were models of Bengali oratory, often rose to flights of lofty eloquence, carrying his audience to great heights of feeling and enthusiasm, and were always instructive and edifying, teeming with learned references to the history of nations and churches. Many of his sermons have been published in a collected form under the name of *Dharmajivan* in two volumes, and several of his lectures in the form of a book named *Baktritastabak*. Some of them are to be found in the form of pamphlets.

VISIT TO ENGLAND

In 1888 Pundit Sastri visited England and lived six months there. He addressed a few meetings here and there in the country, but the chief object of his visit was not preaching, but the study of English life and institutions. He saw all the great representatives of liberal thought there and visited many educational and philanthropic institutions. He was most favourably impressed with the pure and enlightened domestic life of the English middle classes and the freedom and philanthropic activity of English ladies. No fewer than four chapters of his autobiography are occupied with the narration of his impressions of English life, and they are a most interesting and inspiring study. Want of space prevents us from referring to them in detail and forces us to be contented with this brief mention of his life in England. He began his great work, the *History of the Brahmo Samaj*, and intended to finish and publish it there but circumstances prevented him from either finishing or publishing it then. As we shall see, it was not published till about twenty-four years after his English visit.

THE SADHAN ASRAM

Pundit Sastri had a large hand in building the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Mandir, and founding the City College. In fact, as its chief worker, he had a hand in founding and maintaining every institution connected with the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. But the institutions which may be said to have been

actually founded by him, though others helped him, were the Students' Service, the Brahmo Girls' School, the Bankipore Ram Mohun Ray Seminary and the Sadhan Asram or Brahmo Workers' Shelter. Of the last he was not only the founder, but the very heart and soul. It was opened in 1892 for the intellectual and spiritual training of workers in the cause of Brahmoism and also for helping the growth of spirituality in the Samaj. "Its object," says Pundit Sastri in his *History of the Brahmo Samaj*,

"was to bring together and train for mission work such as would offer themselves for the service of God and of the Brahmo Samaj, and agree to live on the faith principle, entirely depending on the voluntary contributions of friends and sympathisers. The Institution has always been maintained by the voluntary contributions of friends and now forms an important part of the Samaj work. As a part of the spiritual exercises of its members, a daily divine service is held in its domestic chapel, besides other gatherings that are regularly held for devotional purposes. The Asram has had a remarkable history of its own. The record of experience in connection with the practical application of the faith principle during the last twenty years would be indeed interesting, fit to be placed by the side of the late George Muller's "Lord's Dealings."

Many candidates for mission work,—Bengalis, Panjabis, and men from the Telugu country—have been trained in the Asram and have become workers, some of them being ordained as regular missionaries of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj. Some of its workers are maintaining the Bankipore Rammohan Ray Seminary and others a large number of schools for the depressed classes in Eastern Bengal.

LITERARY WORK

Pundit Sastri became a noted poet before he was out of his teens. It was his juvenile poem, named

Nirvasiter Vilap (the Lament of the Exile) that first made him famous. His missionary zeal somewhat checked, though it did not altogether stop, the development of his poetic powers. His *Pushpamala* (a Garland of Flowers) is so in reality,—a collection of unfading flowers of pure and lofty feeling—as it is in name. Next came *Chhayamayi Parinay*, an allegorical representation of the union of the human soul with the divine and *Himadrikusum* (Himalayan Flowers), which fully sustained, if they did not add to, his high reputation as a poet. He has also published a number of delightful romances depicting high ideals of social and ethical life. They are *Mejo-Bau*, *Yugantar*, *Nayantara* and *Vidhabar Chhele*. A biography of Babu Ramtanu Lahiri written by our author is a very popular book, and even more so is a small treatise on *Grihadharma* (Domestic Duty). In English Pundit Sastri's only works, besides little tracts on Brahmoism, are *The Mission of the Brahmo Samaj*, *Men I have Seen* and the *History of the Brahmo Samaj*. The last consists of two bulky volumes and is a work of considerable interest. It gives the fullest account that has ever been given of the origin and development of the Brahmo Samaj in all its various phases and must be read by all who would know the movement in its entirety. Having undertaken this laborious task in an advanced time of his life,—he was sixty-five when it was completed—the result was that his health broke down under it, and not only was he un-

able to write out the intended third volume of the book, in which he proposed to give the lives of eminent Brahmo workers and selections from their works, but after the publication of the book he could undertake no other laborious task at all, literary or otherwise.

Besides writing the works mentioned, Pundit Sastri long edited, and when not editing, contributed largely to, the two organs of the Samaj, the *Indian Messenger* and the *Tattvakaumudi*, which succeeded the *Brahmo Public Opinion* and the *Samalochak*. A large number of very touching hymns, specially *nagarsankirtans* or street hymns, some of which are very stirring and popular, were also composed by him.

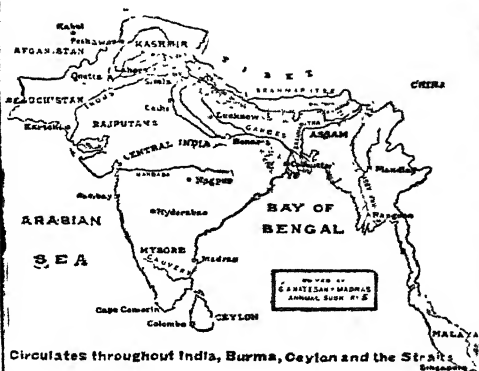
LAST DAYS AND HOURS

The last seven years of Pandit Sastri's life—those immediately following the publication of his *History of the Brahmo Samaj*,—were years of declining strength and diminishing labour in the cause which was so dear to him. When the members of the Samaj saw that the time was not distant when they must part with their revered leader, they held a special *utsav* during the Easter Holidays of 1917, the chief engagement connected with which was the presentation of an address to him in which they poured forth in glowing terms their gratitude for all that he had done and suffered for them. At last the time came when the great worker, like a caged lion, had to be altogether confined to his bed. But even when so confined, he welcomed the visits of friends and took

the keenest interest in all matters concerning the Brahmo Samaj. His senses remained unimpaired till only a few hours before his death. He passed away, on the 30th September 1925, in the midst of prayers and the singing of hymns composed by himself. The body was brought to the compound of the Samaj Mandir, where a service was conducted, and then carried to the cremation grounds followed by a vast crowd including a *sankirtan* party who sang, with the accompaniment of musical instruments some stirring passages from hymns composed by him. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj performed his *sraddha* (requiem ceremony) in their Mandir, inviting the public to join in it. Many moffussil Samajes did the same. The Samaj organs published special numbers giving sketches of his life and labours and reminiscences of him by public men, both Brahmo and non-Brahmo, who had known and worked with him in various fields of work—social, political and philanthropic. Many other papers contained admiring notices of his career and character. Though specially connected with one denomination, Pundit Sivanath Sastri was universally respected for his pure and noble character and his self-sacrificing labour in the cause of his country's progress. [*Abridged by kind permission from a sketch prepared by Pundit Sitamath Tattwabhashan.*]

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